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# **The Impact of Alcohol Advertising on Teenagers in Ireland**

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# Executive Summary

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## 1.1 Introduction

The Department of Health and Children commissioned the Centre for Health Promotion Studies, NUI, Galway, in partnership with the National Alcohol Surveillance Project, to examine the impact of alcohol advertising on teenagers in Ireland. The purpose is to inform the national alcohol policy process. This is the first such national study to be carried out on the impact of alcohol advertising on teenagers.

## 1.2 Rationale

National and international surveys have found that increasing numbers of Irish children and adolescents are experimenting with alcohol and many are developing patterns of use that are related to increased risk of alcohol-related harm. Features of these patterns include starting to drink at an increasingly younger age, regular binge drinking and drunkenness.

Children and adolescents develop beliefs and expectations about alcohol use before they ever experiment with alcohol. These beliefs are acquired through a variety of ways such as observation, vicarious learning and cultural stereotypes. One of the strongest predictors of 'intention to drink' and subsequent drinking behaviour among adolescents is the belief that alcohol aids social interaction.

Much of the research to date has suggested that alcohol advertising has an indirect effect on drinking behaviour, through attitudes, beliefs, and intentions to drink. Alcohol advertising appeals to young people through humour, animation, bright colours and music. Alcohol advertising tends to reinforce the link between drinking and socialisation and being accepted by peers, which are important concerns for adolescents. The use of sexual imagery and celebrity endorsers are thought to be particularly effective techniques for young audiences as one of the main challenges of adolescence is to define what it means to be a man or a woman. Alcohol advertising portrays an entirely positive image of alcohol use and when taken cumulatively, this presents an unbalanced source of information for the developing young person.

At European level, both the WHO and the EU, have made commitments to protecting young people from the pressures to drink which include the issue of alcohol promotions and advertising. In Ireland alcohol advertising voluntary codes have been in existence for some time and are intended to protect young people. The purpose of this study is to offer insights into ways that alcohol advertising can impact on the pressures on young people in Ireland to drink.

## 1.3 Study Design

Focus groups were considered particularly appropriate to explore complex issues such as adolescents' perceptions of media imagery. The National Youth Council of Ireland's affiliated youth clubs, with a membership of 500,000 young people, was the sample frame. Youth groups from the main five geographical regions of the Republic of Ireland were randomly selected to take part in the research. Twenty focus groups were selected, four from each region, two boys' groups and two girls' groups, one each of two age groups, 12-14 and 15-17 years. A total number of 180 participants took part in the research.

Demographic information and information on drinking experience was obtained prior to the discussion, using a self-completion questionnaire. The discussion questions explored alcohol knowledge and beliefs, awareness and appeal of advertising, as well as perceptions of specific advertisements viewed during the session. The sample of alcohol advertisements viewed were Guinness, Coors Light, Heineken and Bacardi Breezer. Awareness of billboard advertising was also assessed by self-completion questionnaire. A content analysis was conducted on the transcribed focus group data using QSR NUD.IST, a computer package for qualitative analysis.

## **1.4 Results**

### **Alcohol beliefs of participants**

Overall, the older groups were far less negative about alcohol than the younger groups. While the number of positive beliefs was similar in both age groups for both genders, the amount of negative belief expressed was substantially less in the older age groups. The younger group also expressed a far greater number of 'neutral' comments than the older groups.

Most of the positive beliefs were concerned with mood or feelings such as 'feel happy', 'feel relaxed' and 'feel more confident'. The most often mentioned belief common to all four groups was that 'having fun' was perceived as a key benefit of alcohol use. This belief was particularly strong amongst the older girls.

The negative beliefs tended to be about behavioural or physical effects, such as 'feel sick to your stomach' and 'do something you'd regret'. The most common to both age groups and both genders were 'get a hangover', 'feel sick to your stomach', 'get into trouble with your parents', 'do something you'd regret', and 'alcohol is expensive'. The older boys had the fewest negative beliefs of all the groups.

### **Favourite advertisements**

When classified according to different consumer products, alcohol advertisements were by far the favourite among the participants. Guinness and Budweiser advertisements were the most frequently mentioned among the alcohol advertisements, in both age groups and genders.

An examination of the themes and content revealed that humour was the most popular ingredient for all of the groups. Other devices that appealed to the participants included animation, music, use of a sports personality, and use of animals, babies or objects with visual appeal. Some advertisements contained more than one element of appeal, and these were among the most popular.

### **Exposure to advertising**

Television was the most common reported source of exposure in all groups, with billboards in second place. Alcohol-branded products were a commonly reported source of exposure for the girls, with the younger groups listing more products than the older groups. These products included such items as hats, tee shirts, key chains and computer screen savers.

## **1.5 Main Themes**

While it is assumed that alcohol advertisements are not deliberately targeted at those under the legal age to drink, they do however have strong appeal for adolescents. The nine main themes that emerged from the participants' perceptions of the alcohol advertisements are outlined below.

### **1. Desirable lifestyle and image**

Teenagers perceive alcohol advertisements as promoting a desirable lifestyle and image that they wish to

experience. The alcohol advertisements reflect their value preferences such as enjoyment of life, adventure, self-expression and excitement.

*They're celebrating the alcoholic drink (girls 12-14, Guinness)*

*It portrays a certain lifestyle, this young sophisticated lifestyle (girl 15-17, Heineken)*

*He's getting everything, he has the girls, he has the education and the job (boy 15-17, Bacardi Breezer)*

Most adolescents like to have fun and to party, one of their most common social activities. The depiction of party scenes was particularly appealing and one which many teenagers personally identified with and found to be realistic. The characters in almost all of the advertisements were seen as overwhelmingly positive by all of the groups. Descriptions such as "fun, outgoing, courageous, wild, mad, sociable and likely to party" were often used.

*They're pretty normal and like going out and having a laugh (12-14 girl, Guinness)*

*Can't have fun if you're not drinking (boy 12-14, Coors Light)*

*They're like me, they like to party (girl 15-17, Coors Light)*

*You'd want to be like that, going out to clubs and having the craic (boy 15-17, Bacardi Breezer)*

It was generally felt that the advertisements depicted 'drinking as fun' and that it is 'for everyone'.

## 2. Appeal of Alcohol Advertising

For young people, humour was identified as the most popular ingredient of 'good' advertisements. Alcohol advertisements use humour in a way that has special appeal for teenagers. Having characters dress in a particular way, engage in funny games and activities especially appeals to teenagers, who find them find both comical and risqué.

*I like the bit where he's running down the street in a bird costume (girl 12-14, Bacardi Breezer)*

*When the deer's head comes through the wall that's funny (girl 12-14, Coors Light)*

*He's funny. (It's) like the education is education on women and they (the interviewers) think it's from college (boy 12-14, Bacardi Breezer)*

The use of music in alcohol advertisements has particular appeal for teenagers not only as a way of providing entertainment as part of the advertisement but also as a way of remembering the advertisements. The girls in both age groups also talked about the appeal of some of the advertisements for their younger siblings or children especially the music and dancing. Other aspects of appeal included the use of colour.

*The music is the thing that makes me remember the ad (boy 12-14, Coors Light)*

*The colour, the music and the women as well (boy 15-17, Bacardi Breezer)*

## 3. Social Lubrication (facilitation)

Meeting new people and learning social skills are some of the challenges facing adolescents in the ongoing process of socialisation. The use of alcohol as a gateway to social success was a clear message that most of the teenagers perceived to be portrayed in the alcohol advertisements, both in terms of helping to provide confidence to talk and mix with others and also to increase their circle of friends.

*It makes you courageous - have self-confidence, don't care what anybody else thinks (girl 12-14, Guinness)*

*You're more loosened up. Not as shy as normal (boy 15-17, Bacardi Breezer)*



*If you're scared to go up and talk to a girl, when you're full you can (boy 12-14, Guinness)*

*Heineken gets you noticed. That what it's saying (girl 15-17, Heineken)*

*Teenagers who don't have much friends, they might get more friends if they have the drink (girl 12-14, Guinness)*

There was also the perception that those who don't drink are more likely to have less friends, to miss out or to be boring.

*You'd be called a loner if you didn't do it (boy 15-17, Bacardi Breezer)*

*I just think they're (non-drinkers) missing out on fun (boy 12-14, Coors Light)*

*It's saying that if you don't drink you'll be sort of boring (girl 12-14, Guinness)*

*An old woman, walking behind, had a sad life. She was wearing black, walking with a stick, showing that people who don't drink Coors have a sad life (boy 15-17, Coors Light)*

*The interviewer is boring. He wouldn't know what to do about fun (girl 15-17, Bacardi Breezer)*

#### **4. Alcohol and sexual attraction**

Building relationships is part of the social activity of young peoples' lives. The use of alcohol as a means of attracting the opposite sex was perceived to be a message in many of the advertisements. Girls and boys dancing together, the sex appeal of the characters and in some ads the drink itself was seen as the seductive ingredient or as a means of sexual arousal.

*There were some fine women in that ad. You might get a fine woman dancing around with a bottle of Guinness (boy 15-17, Guinness)*

*You'll have lots of drink and meet the opposite sex (girl 12-14, Coors Light)*

*It's trying to say you'll have a better change of scoring (boys 12-14, Coors Light)*

*It's a seductive beer (girl 15-17, Heineken)*

*Makes boys randy, makes you look nice when you're pouring it in the glass (girl 15-17, Heineken)*

*Buy her a drink she likes, she'll keep taking your drink and you can get her drunk and take her home (boy 12-14, Bacardi Breezer)*

#### **5. Mood alteration**

The 'feel good' factor, the 'buzz' and the ability of alcohol to influence judgement and actions, were seen by most of the adolescents as being depicted through the behaviour of the characters in the advertisements.

*It will improve your personality (boy 15-17, Bacardi Breezer)*

*Alcohol goes to your brain and it makes you do things you wouldn't normally do (girl 15-17, Guinness)*

*It gets you mad out of it, have a good time with it (boy 12-14, Coors Light)*

*It's good because it makes you wild (girl 12-14, Bacardi Breezer)*

*They like to go around meeting people, forgetting about everything. The fact that the thing is sliding down the hill doesn't bother them. (girl 15-17, Coors Light)*

*Your man forgets all his worries and stuff (boy 15-17, Bacardi Breezer)*

#### **6. The hidden side**

Some of the teenagers suggested that the alcohol advertisements ignored the potential negative consequences of alcohol use. The girls and some of the younger boys mentioned that alcohol can make boys aggressive. Girls themselves suggested they get involved in actions they later regret.

*If you're drinking and you get drunk, you start fighting, you get hyper and start kicking (boy 12-14, Guinness)*

*They would never show anyone being aggressive that just wouldn't sell it (girl 15-17, Guinness)*

*It doesn't show the after effects - the hangover (boy 15-17, Guinness)*

## 7. Energy provider

Given that alcohol use lowers an individual's physical performance, it was surprising that a consistent perceived message was that alcohol gives you 'more energy' and better performance. This was especially mentioned in ads where dancing and lively party scenes were depicted.

*Have one before you go to the disco and you can dance better (boy 12-14, Guinness)*

*It makes you energetic (girl 15-17, Coors Light)*

*Boosts your energy - makes you happy (girl 12-14, Guinness)*

## 8. Learning about alcohol

Some participants thought that one could learn drinking skills such as how to pour properly, as one of the advertisements depicts a person pouring a drink correctly and another person pouring too quickly and spilling it.

*It tells you how to pour a pint (girl 12-14, Heineken)*

*Always look when you're pouring your drink (boy 12-14, Heineken)*

Another of the advertisements conveyed to the teenagers that the product was now available in a bottle rather than a pint glass. Young people interpreted this to mean that the bottle had a more sophisticated look and gave the advantage of making the drink easier to carry or hold while dancing. As one girl said,

*It's (the bottle) easier for clubbing, and you can bring it home with you (girl 15-17, Guinness)*

*A bottle is different, it's not like a pint. It's more cool, sophisticated (boy 15-17, Guinness)*

The name and information provided about the alcoholic strength of one of the beverages, 'Coors Light' were interpreted by many of the participants, excluding older boys, to mean that it was low in alcohol.

*It's not as strong as other drinks (girl 12-14, Coors Light)*

*It states clearly that it's 4.3. You need a lot of that to get drunk (girl 15-17, Coors Light)*

*You'd have to buy so much to get drunk you'd be broke (boy 12-14, Coors Light)*

An advantage of alcohol advertisements was identified as learning the names of drinks through repeat exposure and thus knowing what to request when starting to drink.

*The ads keep the name in your head if you see it a couple of times (boy 15-17)*

*If you're starting to drink, it (ads) would be a big factor cause you'd know the names, when you go to the bar (boy 15-17)*

*If people watch the ads loads of times they'll get used to it and just buy it naturally (girl 12-14, Coors Light)*

## 9. Encouragement to Drink

Most of the teenagers believed that the majority of the advertisements viewed were targeted at young people. They rationalised that the depictions of dancing, clubbing, lively music and wild activities were synonymous with their social activity.

*They're very young, not one old person there (girl 12-14, Coors Light)*

The older girls pointed out that Coors Light is the sponsor of 'South Park' which is a cartoon programme, popular with young people. They reasoned that if they sponsor this show they must be trying to attract teenagers. Younger girls also mentioned 'South Park' and 'Friends'. Older girls mentioned 'Friends', but not as often as the younger girls.

*A lot of teenage stuff like 'Friends' and 'South Park' is sponsored by alcohol (girl 12-14)*

While many felt that the advertisements would have no effect on themselves, some felt they would encourage others to try alcohol, especially those who were shy, lonely or worried. However, others felt it would have no effect.

*I think it's (for) young single people who are waiting to get together, they're looking for someone (girl 15-17, Heineken)*

*Young people who don't drink, it will make them want to drink. They'd see the craic (boys 15-17, Coors Light)*

When asked to respond personally to the advertisements there were a variety of opinions voiced. While some of the participants thought the advertisements would encourage them to try the particular drink, others felt it would not influence them.

*They're all having a really good time and I'd have a really good time if I drank it (girls 12-14).*

Many teenagers made the distinction between liking the advertisements but not liking the brand of drink. However there was one clear exception, the older girls both enthusiastically liked one of the advertisements (Bacardi Breezer) and the drink and felt the advertisement would encourage them to drink it.

*I tried it already, but that advertisement makes you just want to go out and get it.*

*It leaves you with a longing to try it. (girls 15-17, Bacardi Breezer)*

Several of the older girls also perceived it as a girl's drink, or an underage drink, but not a drink for men. The older boys also thought of it as a girl's drink.

The attractiveness of the Bacardi Breezer product as advertised was perceived by older girls as a key factor in encouraging their age group to start drinking and to try this product. Their main explanations were that the product looks very attractive, it can be disguised as a fruit drink, it does not taste of alcohol and does not leave a smell of alcohol on their breath. Younger boys also perceived the advantages of this type of product.

*They (own age) would try it 'cause it tastes like orange and you wouldn't have to buy mints (boy 12-14, Bacardi Breezer)*

## 1.6 Age and gender differences

The older boys and girls (15-17 year olds) identified closely with the characters and scenes in many of the advertisements, which typified their social culture. They believe that as a result of drinking alcohol, a person becomes more sociable, outgoing and extroverted. This implied a tendency to rely on alcohol for social interaction and success.

The younger boys and girls (12-14 year olds) tended to take the advertisements at face value, in other words they believed what they saw and heard. The younger age group perceived a clear negative message about those who don't drink. The implication is that non-drinkers are missing out on a 'fun' social life and are 'boring' people.

The younger age group are particularly concerned about not wanting to be different from their friends and not wanting to say "no" to drinking when others of their age are drinking.

*The only reason you do it (is) because all your friends are doing it and you're afraid that they won't be your friend anymore if you don't drink with them (girls 12-14)*

A message received by the younger age groups was that drinking will help them to make friends and to become more popular. They also believed that watching the advertisements would help them learn about alcohol such as how to pour drink without spilling it.

For many of the girls and some of the boys, alcohol was seen as a way to increase confidence and enhance their ability to socially interact and mix with the opposite sex. The girls in both age groups made more positive comments about the alcohol advertisements than the boys. Taste was a key factor in the induction process and continued use of alcohol for girls and younger boys.

Girls were more inclined to say that alcohol advertisements would encourage others their own age to drink, especially the non-drinker. The older girls were unanimous in their belief that the Bacardi Breezer advertisement would influence a non-drinker to drink. The attractiveness of this alcohol product as portrayed in the advertisement had particular appeal for older girls.

Among older boys there was a more mixed response to the ads. While they perceived that alcohol would help them to mix socially and to attract girls, they were far less inclined to believe that the alcohol advertisements would encourage them to drink. They also believed that the characters in the advertisements were not drunk, unlike other groups, who believed many of the characters to have drunk substantial amounts. Their explanation was that if they had been drunk they would not have been able to dance. This probably reflects their definition of drunkenness and personal experience with alcohol.

Many of the boys were also annoyed at what they perceived as the negative portrayal of males in some of the advertisements. For younger boys, drinking was seen as a way to meet and mix with girls. Several of the boys in both age groups mentioned money as a key factor in determining the amount of alcohol they consumed. The suggestion was that they would drink until their money ran out or

*As many as you can afford (boy, 12-14).*

## **1.7 Conclusions & Recommendations**

### **Conclusions**

During adolescence, young people want to enjoy life while they develop their social networks, build relationships and explore their own identity. The findings of this study suggest that alcohol advertising has a strong attraction for Irish teenagers as it portrays lifestyles and images which are part of their social setting. Alcohol advertising promotes and reinforces the use of alcohol with a range of activities that teenagers aspire to, engage in and enjoy. For young people, the 'selling' aspects of alcohol advertisements are all to do with linking alcohol to positive images of desirable lifestyles, and little to do with selling the actual alcohol product advertised.

The findings of this study suggest that alcohol advertising is likely to have a greater impact among the younger age groups and the 15-17 year old girls than the older boys. The younger age group is particularly vulnerable, given that they perceive the advertising messages as saying that alcohol can help them have fun, make friends and become popular and those that don't drink are missing out. They also perceive alcohol advertisements as widening their knowledge of alcohol use, normalising it and portraying it as a safe and risk free activity. For most of the girls, alcohol use is seen as a way to increase self-confidence. The message from the advertisements for the older age groups, boys and girls, is that success and a good time results from alcohol use.

The advertisements also served to reinforce the alcohol beliefs expressed by the participants that the use of alcohol improves mood and contributes to social and sexual success.

The results of this study, based on the young peoples' perceptions, clearly suggest that the alcohol advertisements infringe the Irish alcohol advertising codes in a number of ways. These include linking alcohol use with social or sexual success and implying that alcohol has therapeutic effects. The participants felt that three out of the four advertisements viewed were clearly targeting young people because of their use of themes and devices that have particular appeal for the young.

Alcohol advertising in the broadcast media is just one aspect of a marketing mix that includes radio, print media, billboards, sponsorships and alcohol-branded products. Young people have high exposure to these recurring positive messages about alcohol, which, over time, helps to create or reinforce their attitudes and beliefs and in turn can influence their intention and subsequent drinking patterns.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are based on the findings of this study:

1. The exposure of children and adolescents to alcohol advertising in Ireland must be significantly reduced.
2. Based on the inadequacy of the current codes, there is a compelling case for an overhaul of the alcohol advertising codes, with particular attention to placement and effective monitoring.
3. Product information and brand names should not be misleading or ambiguous as to the nature and qualities of the product e.g. use of expressions like 'light'.
4. Safety messages and/or health warnings should be part of alcohol advertisements.
5. Schools should provide both general and alcohol-specific media literacy training to enable young people to develop a sense of judgement in understanding media advertising.

# Background

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## 2.1 Youth culture

Youth culture today symbolises major changes that have taken place in the last number of decades. Social changes identified are the commercialisation of leisure, the rise of consumerism, the changing relationship between parents and children and the uses of escapism from reality (McGréil 2001). In addition, new leisure and consumer patterns, the importance of product branding and 'designer' labels, as well as a shift away from a healthy lifestyle ethos have transformed youth culture (Jackson, *et al.*, 2000). The drinks industry has responded to these trends with new designed drinks, an increase in the strength of alcohol products, the use of sophisticated advertising and branding techniques and the opening of new drinking outlets (Jackson *et al.*, 2000).

At an individual level, adolescence is a period of physical, social and psychological maturation, occurring over different times for different individuals. During adolescence, young people pursue opportunities for experimenting in self-discovery and self-expression and want to have fun and enjoyment in the process. Their value preferences include freedom of speech, enjoyment of life, creativity, adventure, participation, friendship and love (Hurrelmann, 2001).

## 2.2 Drinking patterns

Many adolescents experiment with alcohol, with rates of experimentation increasing steadily with age (WHO, 2000). Over half of Ireland's young people begin experimenting with alcohol before the age of 12 (Friel *et al.*, 1999). By the time they reach the 15-16 age group, almost three-quarters are current drinkers or have had a drink in the last month (Hibell *et al.*, 2000). Some of these young drinkers are consuming large quantities of alcohol on the days that they do drink. Of particular concern is the level of binge drinking and drunkenness, where one-third reported binge drinking (five or more drinks in a row) 3 or more times in the last 30 days and one-quarter reported having been drunk 3 or more times in the last 30 days. These figures are substantially higher than the European average (Hibell *et al.*, 2000). Alcohol related problems experienced by these young people included poor school performance, accidents, relationship problems and delinquency problems.

The age when drinking begins appears to be an important risk factor. Chou and Pickering (1992) determined that waiting until the age of 20-21 before starting to drink significantly reduces the risk of developing alcohol-related problems later in life. According to research in the U.S., young people who begin drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21 (Grant & Dawson, 1997).

## 2.3 Alcohol beliefs and expectancies

Alcohol expectancies are the beliefs that an individual has concerning the effects of alcohol and the desirability of those effects. These beliefs are acquired through observation, vicarious learning, and assimilation of cultural stereotypes (Critchlow, 1986) and are present in children before personal experience with alcohol begins (Christiansen *et al.*, 1989; Smith *et al.*, 1995). Alcohol expectancies are learned before drinking begins and are thought to influence both the initiation and maintenance of drinking behaviour (Bauman *et al.*, 1985; Simons-Morton *et al.*, 1999). Once drinking begins, not only is drinking guided by these existing expectancies, but the drinking also predicts subsequent expectancy (Aas *et al.*, 1998). While other biopsychosocial factors, such as peer, school or parental influence, play a

part, alcohol expectancies have been found to have a particularly strong association with drinking behaviour (Simons-Morton *et al.*, 1999).

Grube and Agostinelli (1999) suggest that alcohol beliefs are organised along independent positive and negative dimensions, reflecting distinct motivational systems. In their survey with post-primary school students they found that drinking was highest when respondents believed that (a) negative consequences were unlikely and affective enhancement was likely and (b) both social facilitation and affective enhancement were likely. Research with 15-year-olds in Scotland found that the single most important reason for drinking was the belief that it aids social interaction (Pavis *et al.*, 1997). Christiansen *et al.*, (1989) also found that beliefs about the effects of alcohol on social behaviour were the strongest predictor of subsequent drinking behaviour in adolescents. This perceived role of alcohol for social engagement was also supported by the HBSC (WHO, 2000) and ESPAD (Hibell *et al.*, 2000) findings.

## **2.4 Alcohol beliefs and advertising**

Alcohol advertising appears to influence childrens' beliefs. Grube and Wallack (1994), using 'intention to drink' as the primary outcome variable, focussed on awareness of the advertisements, not merely exposure, among 10 to 12 year olds. The researchers identified four findings as particularly noteworthy:

1. Awareness of advertising was significantly related to increased knowledge of beer brands and slogans as well as more positive beliefs about drinking.
2. Awareness was indirectly related to intentions to drink as an adult through positive beliefs.
3. Awareness of advertising was not significantly related to beliefs about the negative aspects of drinking.
4. Knowledge of beer brands and slogans increased awareness of advertising.

Furthermore, they found that children who expected to drink more frequently as adults had more favourable beliefs about drinking, believed their peers were more approving of drinking, and thought that their parents drank more frequently.

Advertising messages also work in part by reinforcing and supporting widely held beliefs about alcohol (Casswell, 1997). This is supported by research in Glasgow with 10 to 17 year-olds, where the researchers found underage drinkers paid more attention to, and were more appreciative of alcohol advertising than the non-drinkers were (Aitken *et al.*, 1988). The researchers conclude that since underage drinkers are getting something out of watching alcohol advertisements, they are, therefore, reinforced by them.

## **2.5 Alcohol advertising and behaviour**

Much of the research to date has suggested that advertising has an indirect effect on drinking behaviour, through attitudes, beliefs, and intentions to drink (Strasburger, 1995; National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2000). The main goal of alcohol advertising, in common with all advertising, is to influence consumers or future consumers. Bandura's (1977) theory of social learning suggests that advertising influences people via modelling. According to this theory, modelled behaviour is most likely to be adopted when there is an attractive model whose behaviour is rewarded. Advertising often provides such a model, and may also influence drinking behaviour by normalising it, or by repeated associations between the product and appealing imagery (Center for Science in the Public Interest, 1996). Sexual imagery and celebrity endorsers are also thought to be particularly effective for young audiences as one



of the main tasks of adolescence is to define what it means to be a man or a woman (Atkin, 1993). Many alcohol advertisements utilise imagery relating to sex roles, especially male sex roles and masculinity (Wyllie *et al.*, 1998).

Advertising can also provide relatively inexperienced viewers with information about the use of alcohol, such as how to serve 'specialty' or unfamiliar drinks. In this way, advertising can encourage drinking by "widening their alcohol horizons, providing expertise, and overcoming apprehensiveness." (Atkin, 1993)

Wyllie *et al.*, (1998) examined the nature of relationships between the responses of 10 to 17 year-olds to alcohol advertisements and their drinking behaviour as well as future drinking expectancies. Positive responses to the advertisements increased the frequency of current drinking and expected future drinking.

## 2.6 Alcohol advertising appeal

Alcohol advertisements have been found to appeal to children and adolescents, and are frequently named in descriptions of favourite television commercials (Aitken *et al.*, 1988; Wyllie *et al.*, 1998). When asked what they liked about the advertisements, they reported that they were humorous, stylish, had plenty of action and used good music (Aitken *et al.*, 1988). The imagery used in advertising is of particular importance when considering the effects on children, as their relationship with brands is determined more by the emotional than the utilitarian or functional aspects of a product (Pecqueur & Derbais, 1999). For both children and adults, it has been shown that alcohol advertising limited to the promotion of product quality is less appealing than that which uses an image or lifestyle approach (Covell *et al.*, 1994; Kelly & Edwards, 1998).

Most adolescents are concerned with having fun, and the belief that alcohol contributes to having fun appears to be prevalent (Hibell *et al.*, 2000). Wyllie *et al.*, (1997) demonstrated that young people perceived alcohol advertisements to link alcohol use with having a good time. Grube & Wallack (1994) also found that children associated the messages in beer commercials with having a good time, rather than health consequences. Those children who paid more attention to the advertisements were found to be less sceptical about the messages. Also, the more exposure to the advertisements, the greater the expectancy to drink as an adult.

For many, adolescence is a vulnerable stage, where independence from family and acceptance by peers, especially same-sex peers, is important. Advertising that reinforces the link between drinking and being accepted by peers is likely to have a strong appeal (Wyllie *et al.*, 1998). Wyllie *et al.*, (1997) found that young people do perceive televised alcohol advertisements to be portraying that very message, and they responded positively to them. Atkin (1993) uses what he terms a 'personal cost-benefit maximisation framework' to conceptualise the role of television in adolescents' drinking decisions. The benefit side of the ledger includes various anticipated short-term rewards of drinking, such as escape or peer acceptance. These are weighed against the costs, such as monetary expense or hangovers. The long-term costs, such as cirrhosis or dependence, lack salience for adolescents, who are more concerned with the immediate effects. Advertising may also serve to reduce the perceived costs by promoting the beliefs that drinking is the norm and that alcohol is harmless.

While adolescents and others may readily express opinions and perceptions about advertisements, many people deny that they themselves are influenced by them. When asked if they believe acquaintances or peers would be influenced, however, they are more likely to say that they would. This perceptual bias is known as the "third person effect" and is defined by Davison (1983) as the differential in perceived influence that individuals assume when comparing message influence on themselves and others. This



differential is even greater when the source of the message is considered to be socially unacceptable or suspect, such as product advertisements (Gunther & Thorson, 1992).

It has been argued that the mere presence of beer, wine, and liqueur advertising carries with it the implicit belief that use of these products is normal, acceptable, and relatively benign (Atkin, 1993). This is understandable when taken in the context of the total ban on tobacco advertising, and the ban, voluntary or otherwise, on the advertising of spirits. Also, these messages present an entirely positive image of alcohol use, and when taken cumulatively, could present an unbalanced source of influence on the developing young person.

## 2.7 Controls on advertising

Most countries have some form of restriction on alcohol advertising, particularly in the broadcast media (Rehn, 2001). This can take the form of either voluntary self-regulation or legislative restriction. Policies to regulate alcohol advertising include: controls on the placement and content of advertisements; limitations on the type of alcoholic beverage advertised (e.g. distilled beverages) and requirements of counter-advertising, health warnings on advertising and packaging. Some countries with complete bans on alcohol advertising on TV include France, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Norway, Iceland, and Switzerland (Rehn, 2001).

Hill and Casswell (2001) argue that alcohol advertising self-regulation codes are largely irrelevant because they do not address the marketing techniques used to communicate images of desirable lifestyle, sport and other activities relevant for young people. In a comprehensive review of alcohol marketing and young people, Jackson *et al.*, (2000) concluded that the regulatory process based on a voluntary code in the UK “is reactive, ad hoc and weak”. To make alcohol regulation more effective and reduce the appeal of alcohol advertising to young people, the researchers recommended a comprehensive regulatory structure with independent monitoring linked to an international system to reflect the drinks’ industry global operations (Jackson *et al.*, 2000).

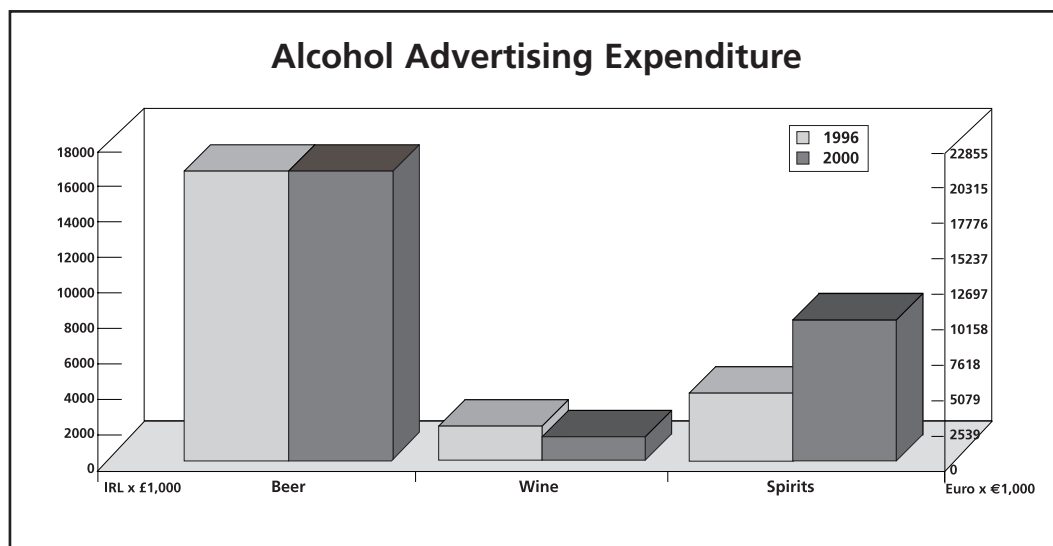
In Ireland, there are a number of voluntary codes that apply to alcohol advertising. The *Code of Advertising Standards for Ireland* (ASAI) applies to all media in theory although not necessarily in practice (Appendix 1). For the broadcasting media, there are the 1997 EU Directive “*Television Without Frontiers* (EU),” the *RTÉ Code of Standards for Broadcast Advertising* (RTÉ) and the 1995 *Code of Standards of Practice and Prohibitions in Advertising of the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht* (DACG) (Appendices 2,3,4). There are also voluntary codes for Poster Advertising and Cinema Advertising. These codes contain many similarities, and all are primarily concerned with protecting children and young people. Similarities among the main codes include sections prohibiting the targeting of minors, the linking of alcohol use with sexual or social success, the linking of alcohol use with enhanced physical performance or therapeutic effects, the encouragement of immoderate consumption and the portrayal of high alcohol content as positive (Appendix 5). The RTÉ and the DACG codes are the only codes that refer to the placement of alcohol advertising. They prohibit the placement, “...in and around programmes primarily intended for young viewers or listeners...” and require the age profile of audiences to be taken into account so that advertisements are transmitted “as far as it is possible” to adults. How these decisions are made is not specified in the codes.

## 2.8 Alcohol advertising exposure

A measure to gauge the exposure of alcohol advertising is the amount of money spent on alcohol advertising. Between 1996 and 2000 there was an increase in the overall spend from £20 (€25.4) to £24 (€30.5) million on alcohol advertising (Appendix 6). When broken down by the three main types of alcoholic beverage, (beer and cider; wine, sherries and vermouth; spirits, liqueurs and cocktails) the

spend on beer advertisements, although the largest, only showed a minor increase. The largest increase occurred in the spirit expenditure from £3.18 (€4.04) to £7.36 (€9.35) million, while the spend on wine decreased (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Alcohol Advertising Expenditure between 1996 and 2000.



Source: Association of Advertisers of Ireland Ltd.

An examination of the different categories of advertising which are Press, TV, Outdoor, Radio and Cinema allows for further breakdown of the advertising spend on alcohol (Table 1). For beer and cider, television had the highest spend (£6.68 (€8.48) million) followed closely by outdoors which saw an increased spend of 41% over the 1996 figure. The category of spirit advertising was highest for outdoor. However, the largest increase occurred in the spirit spend for television from £433,000 (€549,796) in 1996 to £1.42 (€1.80) million in 2000, an increase of 228%. During the same time period a new commercial television station (TV3) came into operation. The increase for spirit advertising on TV would seem to indicate that the voluntary code under the Broadcasting Act whereby “spirits based alcoholic drinks are not advertised on radio and television” was not complied with.

Table 1: Alcohol Advertising spend by beer and spirits

	Beer and Cider			Spirits, Liqueurs, Cocktails		
	1996	2000	% change	1996	2000	% change
Outdoor	4484.3 5693.9	6326.7 8033.3	+ 41%	1917.7 2435.0	4522.9 5742.9	+ 136 %
Press	1690.3 2146.2	1156.9 1469.0	- 32%	663.5 842.5	1212.7 1539.8	+ 83%
TV	7575.4 9618.8	6680.3 8482.2	- 12%	433.3 550.2	1423.5 1807.5	+ 228%
Cinema	1388.6 1763.2	1350.2 1714.4	- 3%	80.9 102.7	174.8 221.0	+ 116%
Radio	905.2 1149.4	550.9 699.5	- 39%	89.9 114.1	34.4 43.7	- 62%

Amount shown in IRL 1,000's. Amount shown in EURO 1,000's. Source: Association of Advertisers of Ireland Ltd.

A second measure to assess alcohol advertising exposure is the number of times alcohol advertisements appear on television. During the period of the data collection for the study, March to May 2000, the total number of TV spots transmitted by RTÉ were 4,793 (Nielsen). The top three were Guinness, Bulmer's Cider and Heineken (Table 2)

*Table 2: Top spots transmitted between March - May 2000*

Advertisement	No of times aired	Advertisement	No of times aired
Guinness	978	Smithwicks	263
Bulmers Cider	669	Bacardi Breezer	255
Heineken	657	Coors Light	197
Carlsberg	355	Archers Peach Schnapps	171
Budweiser	343	Ritz	143
Breo	321	Smirnoff Ice	118

Source: NEILSEN/DDS

## 2.9 International Commitments

The 1995 WHO European Charter on Alcohol states that “all children and adolescents have the right to grow up in an environment protected from the negative consequences of alcohol consumption and to the extent possible, from the promotion of alcoholic beverages.” The more recent Declaration on Young People and Alcohol (WHO, 2001) set a target for Member States of the European Region to, “minimize the pressures on young people to drink, especially in relation to alcohol promotions, free distributions, advertising, sponsorship and availability, with particular emphasis on special events.” The purpose of this study is to examine ways that alcohol advertising may impact on young people in Ireland to drink.

# Methodology

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## 3.1 Design

The use of focus groups, a form of structured group discussion, was considered suitable for this research because it was important that the adolescents' responses were not constrained by a more formal type of questioning. Previous studies have demonstrated that focus groups are particularly suited to exploration of complex issues such as adolescents' perceptions of media imagery (Gray *et al.*, 1996). Adolescence has unique social ordering, values, cultures, and language, requiring any investigations to be placed in the context of the adolescent experience (Rich & Ginsburg, 1999). The aim was to gather the youth perspective, and the more natural setting of the focus group creates the give-and-take atmosphere where opinions naturally arise (Krueger, 1994). Using a pre-existing group as a source of participants allows for a more "natural" exchange of comment, as the members share certain aspects of their daily lives and can relate each other's comments to actual shared experiences (Kitzenger, 1995).

## 3.2 Focus group participants

The sample frame was the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), which represents the voluntary youth organisations in the country. There are 45 Member Organisations affiliated to the NYCI with a total membership of approximately 500,000 young people. Twenty youth groups from the five main geographical regions of the Republic of Ireland, Connaught, Ulster, Munster, Leinster excluding Dublin, and Dublin were randomly selected to take part in the research. Within each region, four focus groups were selected, two boys' groups and two girls' groups, one each of two age groups, 12-14 and 15-17 years. A total number of 180 participants took part in the research.

## 3.3 Data collection

Initial agreement to participate in the study was obtained from the group leaders. The club leaders subsequently received written consent from the parents of the young people to participate in the study. Each of the sessions took place in the premises where the club normally meets and where the participants were likely to feel comfortable. There was a moderator and an assistant moderator for each group, with a male moderator for the boys' groups, and a female for the girls' groups. For consistency, the same two moderators were used for all sessions. After an initial training session, the moderators met regularly throughout the data collection period to ensure uniformity of practice as far as possible. The sessions were tape-recorded, and the assistant moderator took detailed notes, including a record of non-verbal behaviour. Each session lasted about an hour and a half, and was followed by refreshments.

At the beginning of the session, the participants completed a short questionnaire with demographic information and details of alcohol drinking experience. These questions were from Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) (Currie *et al.*, 1998), an international collaborative study of health behaviours in children aged 9-17, which allowed a comparison of samples with the Irish data from this study.

The discussion questions were designed to elicit beliefs and attitudes about alcohol use, as well as to determine responses to alcohol advertising (Appendix 7). After the first five questions, participants were given photocopies of three different billboard advertisements for alcoholic drinks and asked to identify the brand and advertising message, which had been deleted from the photograph. The next stage involved viewing four television alcohol advertisements and the same set of questions were asked following each

advertisement. These advertisements were selected for variety and were representative from 22 different advertisements that had been shown on Irish stations during the first two weeks in March, 2000.

### **3.4 Data analysis**

A content analysis was conducted on the transcribed focus group data using QSR NUD.IST, a computer package for qualitative analysis. Content analysis has been defined by Holsti (1969) as any technique for making inferences about collected data by objectively and systematically identifying characters of message. The category system was developed using the focus group discussions which emerged from the questions, as described by Strauss & Corbin (1990).

# Results

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## 4.1 Characteristics of the sample

A total of 180 adolescents participated in the twenty focus groups. There were a similar number of participants in the two age groups 12-14 years and 15-17 years. The vast majority of participants were attending post primary school, while some were in special outreach projects for disadvantaged areas.

The drinking patterns of participants in the present study were compared to those in the HBSC national survey to examine if they reflected the national profile (Appendix 8). Both samples were similar in their preferences of alcoholic drinks but a greater number of participants in the present study drank regularly and this was especially the case for the younger boys (34% compared to 26%) and girls (24% compared to 16%). Similarly with drunkenness a higher number of the participants in the present study reported being really drunk with the most marked difference in the young girls age group (39% compared to 17%).

A greater number in the present study also watched more television and spent more evenings with friends than the HBSC sample. For the 12-14 age groups 69% of boys and girls spend five or more evenings with friends in comparison to the HBSC study where 34% of boys and 23% of girls spent a similar number of evenings with friends. There was no marked difference in perceived quality of life (sense of happiness).

As in the HBSC study, *spending more evenings with friends* was also significantly ( $p < .01$ ) associated with drunkenness. This indicated that the more evenings spent with friends, the greater the likelihood of frequent drunkenness. This was especially the case for girls and in particular for older girls.

## 4.2 Alcohol beliefs of participants

Two questions elicited beliefs and attitudes and knowledge about drinking alcohol. One concerned alcohol in general, and one was concerned with drinking in the participants' age group.

Overall, the same pattern of responses was seen for both genders. There were twice as many negative beliefs as positive beliefs expressed in the younger age groups, but a similar amount of positive and negative beliefs in the older age groups. While the number of positive beliefs was similar in both age groups for both genders, the amount of negative belief expressed was significantly less in the older age groups. The younger group expressed a much greater number of 'neutral' comments than the older groups. These were statements such as,

*If they want to go out and have a drink, fair enough, that's their business. (boy 12-14).*

Most of the positive beliefs were concerned with mood or feelings (feel happy, feel relaxed, feel more outgoing, worry less, feel more confident, increase desire for sex). Several of the beliefs were to do with improved cognitive functioning, but were also linked with feelings (have a lot of fun, have an easier time talking, easier to express feelings). Other perceived benefits mentioned were alcohol as a reward for work, as a benefit to health, as a way to celebrate special events, and as a good excuse for misbehaviour. Also, some participants simply like the taste of specific alcoholic beverages, or of alcohol in general.

The negative beliefs had more to do with behavioural or physical effects (get hangover, harm one's health, feel sick to one's stomach, do something you'd regret, get into fights, causes accidents, become addicted, memory loss, smells bad, tastes bad). There were three negative beliefs regarding affect or

mood; feel out of control, feel sad, and change personality. Three of the beliefs were to do with the response of others to the drinker (gives you a bad name, opposite sex disapproves, get into trouble with parents). Lastly, the matter of expense was acknowledged.

Both age groups of girls made negative comments about boys who drink.

*When the lads get drunk and you say something to them they're all thick. (girl 12-14)*

Both boys and girls made a number of neutral comments concerning alcohol, but the younger age groups tended to make more of them, particularly when talking about others their own age.

*It depends on how much alcohol you can hold. (girl 12-14)*

*It's their own choice, their body, their life. (boy 12-14)*

## Positive beliefs

Both age groups and both genders mentioned 'having fun' as a benefit of alcohol use more often than any other benefit, and it was the only favourable belief common to all four groups. This belief was particularly strong amongst the older girls. For girls, 'having fun' with alcohol was generally seen as a way to improve a situation. They were more likely than the boys to offer a reason for drinking such as to relieve depression or to improve a social event.

*You can have fun with it when you go out, or if you're depressed or something. (girl 15-17)*

Linking the use of alcohol with special events, such as birthday celebrations or after exams, was seen most often in the younger group of girls. It was not mentioned at all in the older boys' groups, and only once in the younger group of boys and older group of girls. The boys tended to simply state that drinking was fun, or "good craic" and tended to feel that drinking alcohol was an end in itself, rather than a means to an end.

*It's a pastime, like. It's something to do. (boy 15-17)*

There were two benefits that were only mentioned by girls in both age groups. The first, 'feel more confident', concerned the belief that drinking alcohol would increase confidence in oneself. The second belief unique to the girls' groups was that having drunk alcohol could be used as a 'good excuse' for bad behaviour.

*If anybody says anything about you, you can say you were drunk. (girl 15-17)*

Although the boys didn't mention using drunkenness as an excuse, it was discussed by one of the girls' groups as something boys do.

The older girls were the only group to link drinking and an increased desire for sex. While this quality was generally discussed in positive terms, the risk of getting pregnant while drunk was also discussed.

*When we're drinking the boys look gorgeous. (girl 15-17)*

The belief that alcohol tastes good was strongest in the younger group of girls. In discussing taste, they mostly mentioned a specific drink that they liked, but there were also more general statements made. The younger boys did not mention taste, and the older groups of boys and girls mentioned liking the taste of alcohol once each.

Both age groups of boys, as well as the younger groups of girls, stated that alcohol helped a person to feel relaxed. These groups also considered alcohol to be a valid reward for work.

*If you're working all week it's nice to go out for one or two on a Saturday night. (boy 15-17)*

The older group of girls did not connect alcohol with relaxation or as a reward for work, but they did feel that it helps a person to worry less. As one girl said, *Your troubles go away (girl 15-17)*. The younger group of boys also mentioned a belief in this quality.

## Negative beliefs

Of the negative beliefs discussed, those categories that were common to both age groups and both genders were 'get a hangover', 'feel sick to your stomach', 'get into trouble with your parents', 'do something you'd regret', and 'alcohol is expensive'. The older boys had the fewest negative beliefs of all the groups.

Beliefs that were common to all of the age and gender groups except older boys were 'harm to your health', 'feel out of control', 'get into fights', 'feel sad', 'causes accidents', and 'become addicted'. The younger boys were the only group that did not mention the risk of memory loss.

The concern about 'doing something you'd regret' was mentioned more often by the girls' than any other negative belief. This category included concerns about being embarrassed the next day about something done while drinking, or, for the boys, making a fool out of yourself. The girls in both age groups also mentioned the risk of unwanted sexual advances by boys who have been drinking, stating, *They're all just out for one thing when they're drunk (girl 15-17)*. The risk of getting pregnant was also discussed.

Both age groups of girls mentioned losing the trust of others or getting a bad reputation through alcohol use. This did not appear to be a concern for the boys. The girls, but not the boys, also talked about how alcohol can detrimentally change a person's personality, making a person aggressive or obnoxious, for example.

*You get false personalities. People get loud and piss people off around them. (girl, 15-17)*

There was one comment in each age group of girls about the bad smell of alcohol. While the younger boys didn't mind the smell of alcohol themselves, some did feel that if a boy smelled of drink, it would ruin his chances with girls. Some of the younger girls didn't like the taste of alcohol, though there were more who said they liked it.

## 4.3 Favourite advertisements

The first question that participants were asked was, "What is your favourite advertisement?" They were encouraged to consider advertisements for any consumer products in all forms of media. This question served the dual purpose of being an opening question or 'ice-breaker' that is factual in nature and easily answered, but also of providing information about what types of advertisements are particularly appealing. Most of the participants readily provided answers, sometimes listing several advertisements.

Table 3: Top 4 favourite advertisements-products in order of frequency

BOYS 12-14	BOYS 15-17	GIRLS 12-14	GIRLS 15-17
1. Alcohol 2. Food 3. Sportswear 4. Sweets	1. Alcohol 2. Mobile phone / Internet / Computer games 3. Sportswear 4. Non-alcohol drinks	1. Alcohol 2. Food 3. Sweets 4. Non-alcohol drinks	1. Alcohol 2. Food 3. Sweets 4. Mobile phone/ Internet / Computer games



When classified according to product, alcohol advertisements were by far the favourites in both gender and age groups (Table 3). Of these, the most popular advertisements were (in order of popularity):

***Girls 12-14: Guinness, Budweiser, Bacardi Breezer, Heineken***

***Girls 15-17: Budweiser, Guinness, Coors Light, Bacardi Breezer***

***Boys 12-14: Guinness, Budweiser, Heineken, Carlsberg***

***Boys 15-17: Budweiser, Guinness, Coors Light, Tennents***

After alcohol, the next largest product group for both ages of girls and the younger boys was food items, including crisps, snacks, burgers, chips, yoghurts and breakfast cereals. For the older groups of boys, advertisements for mobile phones and computer products came second to those for alcohol.

An examination of the themes and content revealed the humorous advertisements to be the most popular in all of the groups. Most of the alcohol advertisements used humour as a device. For boys in both age groups, those using a famous sports personality came second to humour. Advertisements using animation were mentioned as often as those using a sports personality by the older boys. For girls in both age groups, advertisements with visual appeal, such as those featuring animals or babies, were a distant second place. Animation also featured strongly in all groups, and advertisements with appealing music were mentioned in all groups except the older boys.

Some advertisements contained more than one element of appeal, and these were among the most popular. For example, a humorous Budweiser advertisement that has animated frogs as the central characters was one of the most popular ads.

*Budweiser, the one with the frogs, everyone laughs, seems to like it and finds it funny. (boy 15-17)*

## **4.4 Exposure to advertising**

The participants were asked where they had seen alcohol being advertised. Television was the most common source of exposure in all groups, with billboards in second place. Alcohol-branded products were a commonly reported source of exposure for the girls, with the younger groups listing a slightly larger number of items than the older groups. There were a total of thirty items named, such as t-shirts, key chains, baseball caps, badges and screen savers. The boys seemed less aware of these items, mentioning only a few.

## **4.5 Awareness of alcohol brands and slogans**

To assess the level of awareness of alcohol advertisements, participants individually were asked to identify the brand name and messages contained in a number of advertisements where the names and slogan were blocked out. Outdoor or billboard advertisements were used for this purpose. Overall, three-quarters (79%) of participants recognised the brand Bulmers cider and one-quarter (24%) were able to identify the slogan or message of the advertisement “*create your own original, the original pint bottle*”. Over half (57%) recognised the brand Stag cider and recognised the spirit brand Smirnoff vodka (52%). One-fifth of the younger boys and girls identified the slogan for Stag cider “*follow your instincts*” (Table 4).

Table 4: Awareness of Alcohol Brands and Slogan

	12-14 yrs		15-17 yrs	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
	%	%	%	%
Spirits (Smirnoff)				
Recognition	37	52	48	68
Slogan	-	4	-	2
Cider (Bulmers)				
Recognition	89	72	77	81
Slogan	26	19	21	32
Cider (Stag)				
Recognition	54	59	48	64
Slogan	20	19	7	6

## 4.6 Participants perceptions of TV advertisements

Participants were asked the same series of questions for each of the four television advertisements used in the study. The first four questions required the participants to describe the characters and to analyse the perceived message(s) of the advertisement and the intent of the advertiser. The last three elicited the participant's opinion as to the effects of the advertisement on the viewer.

### 4.6.1 GUINNESS ADVERTISEMENT

The Guinness advertisement shows a brief view of the outside of a theatre with a large sign announcing that Guinness auditions are being held. It then depicts a series of individuals, and some groups, dancing, some in front of a white screen, and some in a backstage room. Some are dancing in a comical way. Some are holding or drinking a bottle of Guinness. In a close-up, one of the dancers holds a sign with the words, "New Guinness Draft in a Bottle," where the word 'new' is in red and the rest in black. A second sign is held up that says, "Dance with it," where the word 'dance' is in red and the rest in black. The final shot is a close-up of a dancer's feet, dancing behind a bottle of Guinness draught on the floor.

#### Description of characters

Both age groups and genders were almost entirely positive in their descriptions of the personalities of the characters, apart from a few comments, calling the characters "stupid," or "fools." One boy thought they were acting as if they had taken Ecstasy.

Both boys and girls in both age groups described the characters as "mad", "fun", "psycho" and "not shy" or "courageous." There were quite a few comments about how they *didn't mind making a show of themselves (boy 15-17)*. They were generally thought to be normal, average people, mostly in the early 20's, who like to go out and have a good time.

*They're just pretty normal, and like going out and having a laugh. (girl, 12-14)*

Several participants in the older groups attributed the characters' ability to have uninhibited fun to their consumption of alcohol. The younger groups did not make this connection. They tended to see the characters as possessing this characteristic with or without the drink. In other words, the younger groups described the characters as mad and funny **and** they like to drink, but the older groups thought they were mad and funny **because of** the drink.

*Shows what drinking will do for you. (boy 15-17)*

*Alcohol goes to the brain and it makes you do things you wouldn't normally do. (girl 15-17)*

## **Perceptions of how much the characters had to drink**

All of the groups, except the older boys, mostly thought that the characters were drunk, or had drunk “a lot.” A small number of participants in these groups thought the characters had drunk nothing, and a similar number thought that they had drunk “a few.”

For the older boys, however, the trend was reversed. They mostly judged the characters to be completely sober or to have had “a few,” with a smaller number who felt they were drunk. Among those who thought they had nothing or only a little to drink, the feeling was that the character would be unable to dance if they were drunk.

## **Perceived messages**

The perceptions of the main messages in the advertisement were similar across groups. Some of these perceptions linked Guinness to messages about lifestyle and image, and some referred to product information. It was generally felt that the advertisement depicted drinking Guinness as fun; that it is for everybody; that it makes the drinker happy, energetic and more confident; it makes a person more popular; and helps one to dance better. There were several comments about how the advertisement attempted to change the image of Guinness as a drink for “old men” to an image as a drink for lively fun for all ages.

*I used to think that Guinness was for old men, but now I see young people drinking it, so it might change your mind. (boy 15-17)*

*They're trying to tell you drink Guinness and you will dance and people will fancy you. (boy 12-14)*

The product information, as stated by the participants, was that the Guinness was in a bottle, rather than a pint glass. This gives the advantage of making the drink easier to carry or hold while dancing. As one girl said, *It's, like, easier for clubbing, and you can bring it home with you (girl 15-17)*. It was thought that the Guinness itself helped a person to dance by reducing inhibition and providing energy.

One of the older boys thought that the bottle was different than the pint in another way:

*A bottle is different. It's not like a pint. It's more cool, sophisticated. (boy 15-17)*

## **Perceived target**

Both age groups and genders thought that the advertisement targeted young people with its focus on dancing and its use of music. There was some discussion about how Guinness is generally perceived as a drink for old men, and that most young people don't drink it. The girls in both age groups talked about the ad's appeal to children.

*Young children like the music and the silly dancing. (girl 12-14)*

*Young people 'cause they go out to discos more than older people. (girl 15-17)*

## **Perceived response of others**

There was a mixed response to the question, “How would people who don't drink already respond to this ad?” In each of the age and gender groups, some thought the advertisement would appeal to the non-drinker because it was funny, and because of the catchy music. The girls were more likely to feel this way, whereas the boys were more divided in opinion, with some stating that a non-drinker would “pass no heed.”

*For a person who wouldn't drink, it's like us watching an insurance ad. (boy 15-17)*

There was some disagreement as to whether the advertisement would actually encourage someone to start drinking. The older boys thought that shy people would be attracted by it, as the characters are not afraid to dance in front of others. Some of the younger girls felt there was a possibility that in certain situations a person could be influenced by the advertisement.

*Teenagers who don't have much friends, they might think they'd get more friends if they have the drink. (girl 12-14)*

There was also more discussion by the girls about the advertisement's appeal to children. Both age groups felt that even though they may not be aware that the advertisement was for an alcoholic drink, children are nevertheless attracted by it because of the music and funny dancing.

Many of the participants seemed doubtful about the possibility of Guinness being the first alcoholic drink for someone who was familiar with it, but thought the advertisement may influence someone who wasn't.

*People just arrived on the planet and seen the advertisement would go out and buy it.  
(Why do you say that?)*

*Young people, beautiful, having mad craic, it's colourful, good music, it's like a party. (boy 15-17)*

The girls in both age groups were more likely than the boys to say the advertisement would encourage someone their own age who had started to drink to try Guinness. While they generally thought the advertisement was appealing, some of the older girls had doubts about its ability to convince someone to try Guinness.

*We probably would want to try it if we didn't know Guinness tastes disgusting. (girl 15-17)*

There was a more mixed response from the boys. The younger boys felt that it was unlikely that someone their age would drink Guinness. Some of the older boys also felt this way, but others thought the advertisement would have some influence.

*They'll remember the drink then, and next time they go to the pub they might drink it. (boy 15-17)*

## **Participant response**

Though many stated that they liked the advertisement, most of the participants thought that it wouldn't influence them to drink Guinness. One element of the advertisement that received positive comment in all groups was the music. However, there were some who said that they didn't like it.

The younger girls were the most positive in their comments, but distinguished between liking the advertisement and liking Guinness. Others thought that the advertisement was misleading, and some thought it was just silly.

*The ad's not really real, because when you have Guinness you don't just start jumping around the place dancing. You fall all over the place, you can't really walk because you're drunk. (girl 12-14)*

While there were a few who said they liked the music or thought it was funny, the younger boys, for the most part, had fewer positive comments to say about either the advertisement or about Guinness.

With regard to liking the ad, the older boys' responses were fairly evenly divided, ranging from "It's a deadly ad," to "It's stupid." Some just stated that they wouldn't pay any heed to the advertisement. As in the other groups, several said they liked the ad, but didn't like Guinness. There was some discussion about whether or not Guinness would help attract girls.

*There were some fine women in that advertisement. You might get a fine woman dancing around with a bottle of Guinness.*

*A lot of girls I know, they can't stand Guinness, even if they smell it off your breath, they can't stand it, so I wouldn't drink it. (boys 15-17)*

## 4.6.2 COORS LIGHT ADVERTISEMENT

The Coors Light advertisement opens with a 'bird's-eye view' of mountains. The camera moves in closer to show a cabin on the side of a steep slope where there is a party going on. An announcer says, "Coors Light, 4.3%, the strength of the Rockies." Inside the cabin music is playing and people are dancing, holding bottles of Coors Light. A neon sign in the shape of an electric guitar with the words, "Coors Light," is in one of the windows. A group of partygoers enter the cabin and put down, with a thud, the case of Coors Light that they had been carrying. This appears to cause the supports holding the cabin level on the steep slope to break, and it begins to slide down the mountain. The announcer's voice says, "Clean and crisp, to go down easy." The cabin whizzes past some houses, passing behind an old woman crossing the street. By the time she looks around to see what it was, it is gone. Next there is a reindeer standing in the way of the cabin, and the cabin crashes into it. The next scene shows the reindeer's head, eyes blinking, sticking through the cabin wall. The text, "Coors Light 4.3%, Keep the lights on," is shown on screen beside a bottle of Coors Light. In the final scene the cabin is seen still sliding down the mountain, under a red sunset.

### Description of characters

The descriptions of the partygoers in this advertisement were overwhelmingly positive in all of the groups. They were described as cool, fun, sociable people who are good 'craic' and like to party. Several of the older boys and girls thought the characters must be rich to be on a skiing holiday, but others described them as average normal people, similar to themselves.

There were several comments by both boys and girls in the younger age group about how the characters must be stupid, as they didn't notice that the house was sliding down the hill. The older groups tended to think the characters knew the house was sliding, but, *they don't care. They're happy with their drink (girl 15-17).*

Estimates of the ages of these characters were consistent across groups, at seventeen to early twenties. There was a slightly broader range of sixteen to thirty among the younger girls, with most guessing eighteen to twenty-five.

There were several comments about the purpose of including the old woman character. The younger girls suggested three possible interpretations of the role. One girl thought it was to show contrast between the old and the young, and another thought the contrast was between fast and slow, as the old woman was moving slowly and the cabin was speeding by her. Another suggestion was the contrast between Coors Light drinkers and those who don't drink it. The third suggestion was that the character provided humour.

The older boys pointed out that there were no older people inside the cabin, and the old woman was left out in the cold.

*An old woman, walking behind, had a sad life. She was wearing black, walking with a stick, showing that people who don't drink Coors have a sad life. (boy 15-17)*

### Perceptions of how much the characters had to drink

When they were asked how much they thought the characters had drunk, the younger groups tended to guess lower amounts than the older groups, although some identified them as being drunk. The suggestion was made in both of the younger groups that the reason they didn't know the house was sliding down the mountain was that they were too drunk to notice.

There was a narrower range of responses among the older groups, but most thought the characters were drunk. Boys in both age groups suggested that the characters would drink, *As many as you could afford (boy 12-14)*.

## Perceived messages

Participants in all groups thought that the advertisement implied that drinking Coors Light was fun and good for parties and socialising. Another notion common to all groups was that a Coors Light drinker would find it easier to mix with the opposite sex.

*You'll have lots of fun and meet the opposite sex. (girl 12-14)*

*Mixed with the opposite sex, maybe it'll help you get on. (girl 15-17)*

All of the groups discussed the meaning of the house sliding down the hill. The older boys and both age groups of girls interpreted the image to mean the drinker would become oblivious to everything else outside.

*They're having a good time and they're drunk and they're rocking so much that the thing goes down and they don't know what's going on. (girl 15-17)*

Both groups of girls discussed at length what was meant by, "Keep the lights on." The boys did not explore this theme. The younger girls offered four interpretations of what was meant by the slogan:

- keep partying all night long;
- the beer is 'light' in alcohol and doesn't make you drunk as quickly as other beers;
- it makes you feel light-headed;
- it isn't heavy, and you can drink more of it than other beers.

The older girls also interpreted it to mean keep the party going all night, and keep drinking.

The girls in both age groups thought that the advertisement implies that the beer acts as a stimulant and, *It makes you energetic (girl 15-17)*.

The name, Coors Light, and the information, 4.3%, was interpreted by some of the participants, in all groups except older boys, to mean that it was a low alcohol beer.

*It's not as strong as other drinks. (girl 12-14)*

*It states clearly that it's 4.3. You need a lot of that to get drunk. (girl 15-17)*

*You'd have to buy so much to get drunk you'd be broke. (boy 12-14)*

A perception that was only expressed by the older boys was that the advertisement says Coors Light is 'cool' or makes the drinker look cool.

Mention was made in both of the older groups that the dancing in this advertisement was more realistic, and that it was a typical party where, *They're acting normal. More like us. (boy 15-17)*

## Perceived target

There was general agreement across the four groups as to the intended target of this advertisement. They thought the advertisement was intended for people who go to parties or young people, and that there was little to appeal to older people. The girls' groups thought that the advertisement would appeal to students, and the younger boys suggested it would appeal to people who like to ski.

*I think it's aimed at our age because when you get older you know that's not real, older people would just think it's stupid, but when you're young you'd just want to try it. (girl 12-14)*

The older girls pointed out that Coors Light is the sponsor of "South Park," which is a cartoon format programme, popular with young people. They reasoned that if they sponsor this show, they must be trying to attract teenagers.

*South Park is more of a teen oriented show, but a lot of 8 or 9-year-olds watch it because it's a cartoon. (girl 15-17)*

Both age groups of boys thought that the advertisement was aimed at people just beginning to drink, or people who didn't want a strong drink.

The girls in both age groups thought the advertisement could also be targeting children, because they would find it funny or cool.

### Perceived response of others

A distinct age divide was seen in the perceptions of how others would respond to the advertisement. The older groups in both genders thought the advertisement would encourage people to start drinking.

*Young people who don't drink, it will make them want to drink. They'd see the craic. (boy 15-17)*

The younger groups were more mixed in their opinions. Some thought that a non-drinker probably wouldn't take any notice, and some thought it would have an influence.

Most of the older participants thought the advertisement would encourage someone their own age who drinks alcohol to try Coors Light. The younger groups gave more mixed responses, however, or were less sure of the ad's effect than the older groups.

*It would make you drink it. You'd buy that drink.*

*If you're watching it with your friends it would make you want some. (boys 15-17)*

One of the older girls thought the advertisement would especially influence someone just starting to drink. Because of her belief, shared by most of the participants, that Coors Light was lower in alcohol than other beers, she thought it would appeal to someone who hadn't built up much tolerance to alcohol.

*If you were starting to drink, it shows that you would be able to have it and you could have a few of them and it would show that you have some tolerance. You know, everyone says, 'Oh, I had so many vodkas, and I was still fine afterwards.' So they could go out and be able to drink. (girl 15-17)*

### Participant response

The participants were mixed in their response to this advertisement. In both genders and age groups, there were some who liked the advertisement and thought it would influence them to drink Coors Light, and others who felt the opposite, and still others who liked the advertisement but said it wouldn't influence them. The girls in both age groups made more positive comments than the boys did.

*I didn't like it. It didn't have much to it. They were only drinking and sliding down the hill.*

*Well, if I saw that, I'd want to try it. They're all having a really good time and I'd have a really good time if I drank it. (girls 12-14)*

Those who liked the advertisement thought it was funny, or could relate to the characters and the party scene. Some liked the ski theme, some liked to look at the mountains and snow, and some liked to look at the characters. The older girls and the younger boys noted that, *The music is the thing that makes me remember the advertisement. (girl 15-17)*



### 4.6.3 HEINEKEN ADVERTISEMENT

There are two main characters in this ad, one male and one female. Music is playing. The man is just turning from the bar, having received his bottle of Heineken and an empty glass. As he turns, he notices an attractive woman sitting at a table, who also has a bottle of Heineken and an empty glass. She catches his eye, and while he stares open-mouthed at her she pours her beer perfectly, sets the empty bottle down, and looks at him with a defiant toss of the head. The words, “The premature pour,” appear. He pours his beer, but continues to stare at her, open-mouthed. He pours the beer too quickly and it overflows, spilling out. He looks down at the spilled beer, looks up at her, and the words, “Heineken. The last word in beer,” appear.

#### Description of characters

The description of the female character was similar across groups. However, there were differences between the genders in the descriptions of the male character.

Both characters were thought to be in the mid to late twenties by most participants. The younger groups in both genders suggested a wider range of ages, from 18-40, than the older groups. Some of the girls in both age groups thought the female character was older or more mature than the male, but all of the boys and the rest of the girls thought they were the same age.

The younger girls picked up on the word ‘premature,’ relating it to ‘immature’ and ‘amateur.’ They regarded the male character as acting very like a teenage boy. However, the older boys and girls did refer to the sexual innuendo of ‘premature’.

The woman was described as a flirt and a teaser by all of the groups. The younger boys said little else about her, concentrating more on the male character. The older boys also had more to say about the man than they did the woman, but added that she was pretty and good at pouring the beer.

The girls in both age groups described the woman as pretty, cool, confident and sophisticated, but she was also described as a show-off, stuck-up and “tarty.” The older girls questioned why she seemed to be by herself in a pub. It was also noted that she knew how to pour the Heineken and that *She’s flirty when she’s pouring the drink. (girl 15-17)*

The boys in both age groups had little sympathy for the male character. They thought he was “a nerd,” “stupid” or “sad.” Some of the younger boys also thought he was funny.

Most girls in both age groups thought he was shy, stupid, awkward and not very nice-looking, but there were also a few who thought he was “cute” and “nice.” They thought he probably didn’t have much experience with women.

*He looks like he just discovered girls. (girl 12-14)*

#### Perceptions of how much the characters had to drink

All the participants were in agreement that the characters had only just started to drink, and most thought that the beer they were holding was their first or second. One of the younger boys thought that the woman could have been sitting there for a while, and she could have had a few drinks, but it was the man’s first. One of the younger girls thought the reverse.

#### Perceived messages

Both boys and girls in both age groups thought that the advertisement suggested that drinking Heineken was a way to attract the opposite sex.



*It'll improve your chances with women. (boy 15-17)*

*Heineken gets you noticed. That's what it's saying.*

*Yeah, it's seductive beer. (girls 15-17)*

The participants felt that the spilling of the beer was to make a point about how to pour beer, or to warn the drinker to be careful when pouring.

There were several participants in the older groups who felt that the advertisement portrayed, ... *a certain lifestyle, this young sophisticated lifestyle (girl 15-17).*

## Perceived target

The majority of the participants thought that this advertisement targets people in the 20 to 30 age range. All of the groups except the younger boys thought the advertisement was for single people, or someone who is lonely.

*I think it's young single people who are wanting to get together, they're looking for someone. (girl 15-17)*

## Perceived response of others

Many of the participants had reservations about the ability of this advertisement to persuade people to drink Heineken if they were currently non-drinkers. There were also some in each group who thought that certain people would be influenced.

The younger boys felt that the thought of drawing the attention of a woman like the character in the advertisement could be an incentive to drink. Others thought that a non-drinker wouldn't take any notice of the ad, or may just enjoy looking at the woman. Most of the older boys, however, felt that the advertisement would have no effect on a non-drinker.

The girls in the younger group were more inclined to think the advertisement would interest the non-drinker. Some thought that the initiate could learn drinking skills from the ad, such as how to pour properly, but it might also create apprehension.

*It would kind of scare you, if you were just starting to drink you'd be scared that you'd pour it all over you and make a fool of yourself. (girl 12-14)*

The older girls also thought that the main interest for the non-drinker would be to people who were looking for a partner. Others thought that girls were more likely to be influenced. Similar to comments made in the younger girls' and older boys' groups, it was suggested that a first-time drinker would fear looking like a "loser."

Across all groups, most participants felt this advertisement would have no appeal for a drinker their age. In all groups except the younger girls, it was felt that the advertisement could have the opposite effect and put a person off drinking rather than risk embarrassment.

The older boys had the strongest objections to the advertisement, but they did say that girls might be influenced, as they are more likely to drink bottles of beer as opposed to pints. They complained about the pub, thought the male character was "a loser," and thought it suggested one could spill beer, making a fool of oneself.

Several of the younger girls thought that others might find the advertisement funny. It was suggested that some girls ... *probably would like to be like that girl (girl 12-14).* For the most part, however, the younger girls also felt that the advertisement would have no effect on drinkers of their age.

## Participant response

When asked for their personal response to the ad, the participants were generally less critical than they were in response to the previous question. The younger group of boys, however, remained unimpressed by the advertisement. One boy in this group said he liked the ad, and one liked looking at the woman in the advertisement. The others thought it was an ineffective advertisement.

About half of the older boys thought the advertisement was funny, and the rest found it uninteresting. Most felt it would not influence them in any way, or *It's entertaining, but that's it (boy 15-17)*.

### 4.6.4 BACARDI BREEZER ADVERTISEMENT

The opening scene in this advertisement is of a male character at a job interview. As he is asked questions based on his application, the viewer is shown what he is thinking. His thoughts are accompanied by loud music and consist of what is assumed to be memories of experiences he has had in connection with Bacardi Breezer. There is a sharp contrast between the job interview scene and his memories. These experiences are related to the questions as 'double entendre.' When the interviewer asks, "How many people did you have under you?" the main character is shown 'crowd surfing,' or being held up by a crowd at what appears to be a concert or night club. The interviewer says, "I see you have a firm grasp of figures," and the character is seen drawing a design on a woman's stomach. When the interviewer refers to his stated interest in ornithology, the memory is of being at what appears to be a festival, dressed in a bird costume. The advertisement ends with the message, "There's Latin spirit in everyone."

#### Description of characters

The central character in the advertisement appealed to almost all of the participants. He was described by all groups as in his mid twenties, fun, outgoing, wild, but intelligent. There were a few participants in each group who regarded him as unusual or extreme, but there were others who said he was normal or average when he wasn't out drinking.

*You'd want to be like that, going out to clubs and having the craic. (boy 15-17)*

The older groups were struck by his ability to lead a double life, and by his cleverness at convincing the interviewers that he is respectable. In all groups except the younger boys, some participants explained that, *The drink makes him want to do everything, do all these weird things (girl 12-14)*. Like Dr. Jekyll, the drink transforms him.

*He's a normal person every day, then he drinks it and turns into a party animal. (boy 15-17)*

There were different views as to what the contrasting scenes represented. While the older groups generally thought that the "Latin spirit" scenes were current, some of the younger participants assumed that his wild days are in his past and that now he's ready to settle down.

*He had fun in his life and now he's sensible, going to get a job. (girl 12-14)*

Some girls of both age groups thought he was extremely attractive.

The older groups of both genders and the younger girls drew a contrast with the characters interviewing him for a job. They were described as "boring," "serious," and "depressed." It was thought that they were most likely non-drinkers.

*The interviewer is boring. He wouldn't know what to do about fun. (girl 15-17)*  
*Maybe they don't drink. (girl 15-17)*

## Perceptions of how much the characters had to drink

In all groups it was generally assumed that the main character was drunk when he was out. Many felt that he would have to be drunk to do the things he was doing in the advertisement. When asked about the quantity of drink consumed, the most common answer in all groups was 'a lot' or 'drunk'. The younger groups tended to guess higher amounts than the older groups.

Several of the older participants thought he probably wasn't very drunk because he could still walk, and he could remember what had happened.

*I don't think he was acting drunk. He wasn't staggering about. (boy 15-17)*  
*Still able to run around, like, dance and stuff without falling around the place. (boy 15-17)*

## Perceived messages

The responses to this question were remarkably similar in all the groups. Regardless of age or gender, the participants said the main messages in this advertisement were: drinking Bacardi Breezer would bring out a person's wild side, it is fun, it is sexy, and it will improve a person's social life.

The participants felt the advertisement implied that drinking Bacardi Breezer would temporarily change a person or bring out a person's hidden wild side, allowing for lots of fun. Furthermore, the changed person reverts to normal the next day, making it possible to function well at a demanding task, such as a job interview. In other words, he has *the best of both worlds, really (boy 15-17)*. Most participants seemed to think the job interview scene was taking place the morning after the other 'Latin spirit' scenes.

*You can have a really fun time and the next day you can have a really excellent job and you can earn loads of dosh and the next day you can go out again. (girl 12-14)*

Some participants in all groups noted the theme of change, which was given emphasis by the use of music, light and colour. One described that *He was in a dull room, then there were all bright lights. (boy 15-17)* An older girl identified a reason for this contrast as *That's just to show up the very fun side, I think. (girl 15-17)*

Several of the older girls mentioned the colourful and attractive appearance of the drink itself.

There were numerous comments about how the advertisement relates drinking Bacardi Breezer to having fun or enjoying oneself. The 'fun' was often described in superlatives. Not only does the drinker have more fun, but he also has a better social life, and *He doesn't care what people think. He's not embarrassed or anything. (girl 12-14)* The girls in both age groups thought that another benefit of the drink, as shown in the ad, was to provide the energy required to have all the fun.

*When it says there's Latin spirit in everyone it's saying that whenever you drink this you've loads of spirit inside you and you're having a great time. (girl 15-17)*

Many of them also thought that the advertisement implied that the drink would *improve your chance of scoring. (boy 15-17)* There was discussion in both age groups of boys as to how Bacardi Breezer might improve their chances with girls. The younger boys thought it would be good to drink before going to a disco, *because your man is drinking it and gets loads of girls in the night club (boy 12-14)*. The older boys suggested that *It will improve your personality. (boy 15-17)*

Some felt it would help for the boy to drink it, and others thought that it would help if the girl drank it.

*Buy her a drink she likes, she'll keep taking your drink and you can get her drunk and take her home. (boy 12-14)*

## Perceived target

Most participants in both gender and age groups thought this advertisement targeted young people under thirty as *It's, like, a young person's drink (girl 15-17)*. The activities of the central character were seen as more likely to be those of a younger person. The central character, who was the Bacardi Breezer drinker, was seen in contrast to the older job interviewers.

Several of the older boys thought the advertisement was aimed at women, and most thought it was aimed at both men and women. None felt it was solely aimed at men, and a few were of the opinion that the drink was *a girl's drink. (boy 15-17)*

A few of the older girls, however, thought it was intended for men, pointing out that there was another version of the advertisement with a female as the central character. There was some doubt as to whether men would actually drink it. Several of this group also thought of Bacardi Breezer as a girl's drink, or an underage drink, but not a drink for men, even to the point of not believing that the central character would really drink it.

*Boys wouldn't, boys are like, 'I wouldn't drink Bacardi Breezer, that's a girl's drink.' Boys drink vodka and all that strong stuff. (girl 15-17)*

## Perceived response of others

In all groups there were many participants who felt that this advertisement was likely to influence a non-drinker to start drinking. The reasons given were that it looks like great fun, it looks cool, and it looks like an attractive and tasty drink.

*Yeah, it would because it looks nice. It looks like lemonade. (girl 15-17)*

In three out of the four groups there were a few who didn't think the advertisement would have any influence on the non-drinker. The older girls, however, were unanimous in their belief that the advertisement would influence a non-drinker to drink.

When asked how they thought a person their own age who had started drinking would respond to this ad, most of the participants in all groups thought the advertisement would have influence.

*I think if you were sitting watching TV and wanted a drink you would go out and get a Bacardi Breezer. (girl 15-17)*

One of the reasons offered for the appeal of Bacardi Breezer was that it looks like a fruit drink and if put into a glass would look like a non-alcoholic drink. Others said that it doesn't taste like alcohol and doesn't smell as much on the breath.

## Participant response

All of the older girls, most of the younger boys, more than half of the younger girls, and nearly half of the older boys said they liked this advertisement. Many of those who liked it also said the advertisement would encourage them to drink Bacardi Breezer.

The younger boys mentioned the fun, the bright colours, the humour, the attractive women, and playing golf with an egg. One boy thought it was a woman's drink, and one boy said, *Most people our age drink Bulmers (boy 12-14)*. Another boy said he liked another Bacardi Breezer advertisement better.

The older boys did not elaborate much as to why they did or did not like the advertisement. Of those who didn't think they would be influenced by the ad, one said it was a girl's drink, another said it was unreal, but most just said they didn't like it or they ignore all ads.

About a third of the participants in the younger group of girls said they didn't like the advertisement. Several said they thought it was too long, and others thought it was stupid or didn't make sense.

*I don't like the ad, but the drink is very nice. (girl 12-14)*

The younger girls who liked the advertisement mentioned the music and thought it was funny and colourful. They liked the way the character used double meanings in his interview, and they liked the scenes where he is wearing a bird costume, when he 'crowd surfs,' and when he hits the egg with a golf club.

The older girls were the most enthusiastic of all the groups.

*I tried it already, but that advertisement makes you just want to go out and get it.*

*It leaves you with a longing to try it.*

*I want a Bacardi Breezer right now. (girls 15-17)*

They thought it was lively, catchy and fast moving. They liked the music, the humour, the contrast in the scenes and the bright colours. They mentioned the dancing scene, the tattoo scene and the male character dressing like a woman.

## **Favourite Alcohol advertisement**

Participants were asked which of the four advertisements that they viewed did they like the best. The Bacardi Breezer advertisement was strongly the favourite for the younger boys and the older girls. The younger girls' first choice was fairly evenly divided between the Guinness advertisement and the Bacardi Breezer ad, and the older boys preferred the Coors Light advertisement.

The younger boys liked the Bacardi Breezer advertisement because it was funny, the character was having a great time, and they liked looking at the women in the advertisement. One boy said he liked the advertisement best because he liked the drink the best. The Coors Light advertisement was the second favourite advertisement among this group. They liked the music and the party scene and thought it had "more life" to it.

The older boys liked the music and the party scene in the Coors Light ad, some participants stating that it was realistic. The Bacardi Breezer advertisement was liked best by almost as many in this group as the Coors advertisement. They liked the character and how he represented success, both professionally and socially. Some people also liked the Heineken advertisement best because it was funny.

Those among the younger girls who liked the Bacardi Breezer advertisement liked it for its colour and excitement, and they thought the central character was sexy. Some who didn't like it said it was too long. They thought the Guinness advertisement was funny and they liked the music. It appealed to them that the characters were 'real people' and not actors.

The older girls also thought the Bacardi Breezer advertisement was lively and colourful, and they thought it was funny how the character fooled the interviewers. One girl said she would personally prefer to watch the Heineken ad, but thought the Bacardi Breezer advertisement would have a bigger influence. Another said that the Bacardi Breezer advertisement would appeal more to their age group.

## 4.7 Code compliance

The codes of advertising that are intended to apply to broadcast advertising in Ireland all set down certain guidelines to protect young people from any adverse influence from alcohol advertising. One way to assess compliance with the codes is to ask the young people themselves how they perceive the advertisements. The results of this study, based on the young peoples' perceptions clearly suggest that the advertisements infringe the codes in a number of ways. These include the linking of alcohol use with social or sexual success, depiction of immoderate drinking, use of characters that appear under 25, implying that alcohol has therapeutic effects or improves physical performance, and the targeting of young people.

Table 5: Inferred code infringement for each advertisement

Immoderate drinking	Targets young people	Therapeutic qualities or physical effects	Social or sexual success	Age of characters
Guinness Coors Light Bacardi Breezer	Guinness Coors Light Bacardi Breezer	Guinness Coors Light Bacardi Breezer	Guinness Coors Light Heineken Bacardi Breezer	Guinness Coors Light

### Guinness Advertisement

The preceptions of the young people suggest that there are several points of concern regarding code compliance about this advertisement, particularly as it was frequently mentioned among the participants' favourite ads. These are: the perceived targeting of young people, linking alcohol with social success, and linking alcohol use with enhanced physical performance or physical effects.

The participants felt that this advertisement was targeting young people. The advertisement clearly appeals to many of the young people in this study, and they felt that the characters were, "normal average people." There was also some discussion of its appeal to the younger siblings and acquaintances of some of the participants, who were attracted by the music and dancing. The participants felt that the dancing theme was chosen to target young people. Furthermore, some of the characters were thought to be under 25, which is the youngest apparent age specified in the ASAI and RTE codes.

The participants felt that the characters were having fun, and remarked on the apparent lack of embarrassment at standing up in front of people and dancing. Social embarrassment and dancing are both salient issues with young people. They felt that the advertisement might especially appeal to those who were lonely or shy, as it would offer them a means of social success, and a way to overcome their inhibitions. Many felt that the implication was that not only would Guinness help a person to overcome inhibitions, but it would also provide the energy to keep dancing.

While the younger groups noted that the characters were drinking Guinness and having fun, the older groups felt that they were having fun **because** of the Guinness. In both cases there is a link, but in the latter the relationship is seen as one of cause and effect. Since 'having fun' was the most common alcohol belief expressed by the participants, the advertisement is a potential source of reinforcement for this belief.

All of the groups, except for the older boys, thought the characters were drunk or had had a lot to drink. This perception infringes all of the codes.

## Coors Light Advertisement

The perceptions of the participants suggest a number of areas where the Coors Light advertisement's compliance with the codes are open to question. It was generally felt that the intended target was young people, that the characters were under 25, that they were drunk, that it linked alcohol use with social success, and that it implied therapeutic benefits and stimulant effects.

This advertisement strongly appealed to the participants. When asked to consider all advertising for any product, it was frequently mentioned as a favourite, particularly among the older groups. When rating the four ads used in this research, it was liked best among the older boys and second by the younger boys. Despite the improbability of the cabin sliding down the hill, it was generally felt that the party scene depicted was realistic, and the characters were similar to the participants.

There was general agreement that the characters in the advertisement were definitely under 25, and possibly under 18. It was also felt that it was unlikely that anyone older than 25 would be at a party such as the one in the advertisement.

All of the groups felt that the characters had drunk more than the recommended safe limits. They reasoned that the characters were too drunk to notice the cabin sliding down the hill. Some felt that this was a metaphor for the ability of Coors Light to help one to forget one's troubles, which may be considered a therapeutic effect or a means of resolving personal conflict.

It was noted by all of the groups that all the people in the advertisement were dancing with a partner and appeared to be having a great time. One of the stronger messages in the advertisement seemed to be that Coors Light contributes to social success, a message prohibited by all four codes.

The slogan, "Keep the lights on" was interpreted by many to mean that drinking Coors Light gives a person the energy to party all night. This could be interpreted as a stimulant effect. While this is a perception rather than an actual claim, it appears to be the message that some young people are getting from this advertisement.

There seemed to be a general lack of knowledge about the alcohol content of beer and the reference to 'light' and the stated alcohol content of 4.3% was misleading for the adolescents. It led many to believe that it was a low alcohol beer, and, therefore, one could drink more of it without getting drunk. This misunderstanding could be dangerous.

## Heineken Advertisement

The study suggests that the Heineken advertisement is more compliant with the codes than the other advertisements. The main area of concern is the perception of linking alcohol use with sexual success.

This advertisement did not generally appeal to the participants. They did not seem to find it humorous or to relate to the characters, nor did the younger groups appear to understand the sexual innuendo in the phrase 'premature pour', although some of the older groups did. The boys groups were particularly dismissive of the male character, as he had spilled his drink. Several of the girls noted that the viewer would learn how to pour a glass of beer, or, more pertinently, how not to pour beer. For the inexperienced drinker, this could be an important source of information.

There was a consensus of opinion that both characters had just begun to drink, and had only had one or two. This is the only one of the four ads used in this study that was clearly in line with the regulations regarding depiction of 'immoderate consumption.'



Most of the participants thought the advertisement was trying to say that Heineken was good for attracting the opposite sex. They thought that the advertisement would appeal to single people, or lonely people, and that the main message was that drinking Heineken is a way to get noticed. For some, this may, “create the impression that the consumption of alcohol contributes towards social or sexual success.”

### **Bacardi Breezer Advertisement**

The participants' responses to this advertisement suggest non-compliance with all of the codes in several areas, including the targeting of young people, the portrayal of immoderate consumption, the linking of alcohol with social and sexual success, and the implication of therapeutic effects.

The Bacardi Breezer advertisement had a strong appeal for all of the groups. Not only was the advertisement generally appealing for its colour, excitement and music, the central character was also thought to be attractive or appealing. Some of the participants stated a desire to emulate him.

One of the more worrying aspects of this advertisement is that the central character was seen as having wild and exciting alcohol-related experiences with no recrimination. The participants noted that he seemed to be able to “have it all.” He was thought to have both social and sexual success, as well as professional success, which was linked to drinking Bacardi Breezer. These perceptions indicate that this advertisement infringes all four codes.

Most of the participants assumed he was drinking heavily in the party scenes. When estimating how many bottles he had drunk, few guessed less than 10 and some guessed 20 or 30. Clearly, this would be considered ‘immoderate consumption,’ the portrayal of which is prohibited by all of the codes.

Some participants felt that the interviewers were non-drinkers, and were used as contrast for the main character. They were thought to be boring and dull. This negative depiction of abstinence is prohibited by the ASTI and DACG codes.

Many participants felt that the advertisement implied that Bacardi Breezer would bring about change in the drinker, and that it would improve one's personality and increase confidence. This was inferred from the slogan, “There's Latin spirit in everyone.” This may be considered to be a suggestion that the drink has therapeutic qualities or is a way to resolve personal conflict, again contradicting the codes.



## 5. Discussion

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The alcohol beliefs of the participants reflect patterns seen in other studies in that the older group had more positive beliefs regarding alcohol than the younger group (Austin & Knaus, 2000; Aas *et al.*, 1998). The ESPAD report also identified a combination of high positive and low negative expectancies for Irish teenagers (Hibell *et al.*, 2000). The younger age groups provided a significant number of neutral comments, which may be indicative of a period of transition in beliefs and attitudes towards alcohol (Austin & Knaus, 2000). The responses represent knowledge and beliefs rather than the personal desirability of the beliefs, or expectancies.

The positive beliefs of the participants tended to be in the realm of affective enhancement and social facilitation. This in itself raises concern, as other research has linked this combination of expectancies to higher levels of drinking (Grube & Agostinelli, 1999). Pavis *et al.*, (1997) & Christiansen *et al.*, (1989) have suggested that the linking of alcohol with social success is perhaps the most influential factor in predicting drinking behaviour.

The overwhelmingly positive response of the participants to alcohol advertising is an indication of the potential role that advertising plays in setting the context for the drinking behaviour of Irish young people. Not only are they aware of the advertisements, they also consider them to be their favourite advertisement, and the brands of the favourite advertisements reflect some of the most heavily advertised brands. There was a high level of awareness among the girls of alcohol-branded products with many possessing items such as t-shirts, baseball caps and key chains. According to Wyllie *et al.*, (1998), such a positive response to alcohol marketing not only increases the frequency of current drinking, but also the amount of expected future drinking.

Alcohol advertisements clearly appeal to many of the young people in this study. The music and party scenes were especially appealing to all groups which, according to Pecheux and Derbais (1999), provides an emotional link for children to the alcohol product. There was also some discussion about the alcohol advertisements' appeal to the participants' younger siblings due to the attractiveness of the music and dancing. The participants also felt that the dancing theme was chosen to target young people. Participants felt that the characters were "normal average people" and for the older group similar to themselves. According to Austin and Knaus (2000), this perception increases the advertisement's persuasiveness.

The perceptions of the main messages in the advertisements were about lifestyle and image and some referred to product information. It was generally felt that the advertisements depicted 'drinking as fun', 'that it is for everyone'; 'it makes the drinker happy', 'energetic and more confident', would 'make a person more popular' and 'helps to dance better'. All of the groups thought a clear message was that drink would improve a person's social life, a key factor found to influence intention to drink (Atkin, 1993; Pavis *et al.*, 1997; Wyllie *et al.*, 1998). Some of the advertisements were also perceived to portray a message that drinking would make it easier to mix with, and to attract the opposite sex. Thus alcohol advertisements can shape the social learning process (Bandura, 1979).

The product information, as stated by the participants, covered different aspects such as alcoholic strength which was misinterpreted by some of the participants, excluding older boys, to mean that it was a low alcohol beer. Several of the older girls mentioned the colourful and attractive appearance of one of the drinks and the fact that it had a fruity taste rather than an alcohol taste. The packaging of this alcohol product has been identified as one of its most important marketing features (Jackson *et al.*, 2000).

When asked to respond personally to the advertisements there were a variety of opinions. Many made the distinction between liking the advertisements but not liking the brand of drink. A “third-person effect” was seen, where the participants did not generally feel that they would be influenced by the advertisements, but felt that others especially those in their age group would be (Davidson, 1983). However, some did indicate that the advertisements would encourage them to try the particular drink. The girls in both age groups made more positive comments than the boys did.

The advertisements served to promote and reinforce the alcohol beliefs expressed by the participants, most notably that drinking alcohol is fun, and that the use of alcohol improves mood and contributes to social and sexual success. If, as Wyllie *et al.*, (1997) found, linking alcohol use with having fun is likely to appeal to young people then alcohol advertisements portraying these images act to reinforce this belief. For young people the central character in one of the advertisements was thought to have both social and sexual success, as well as professional success, which was linked to drinking the product. These alcohol expectancies have been shown to influence the initiation and maintenance of drinking behaviour (Bauman *et al.*, 1985; Simons-Morton *et al.*, 1999). Some of the participants felt that the advertisements might especially appeal to those who were lonely or shy, as it would offer them a means of social success and a way of overcoming their inhibitions or to get noticed.

# 6. Conclusions & Recommendations

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## Conclusions

During adolescence, young people want to enjoy life while they develop their social networks, build relationships and explore their own identity. The findings of this study suggest that alcohol advertising has a strong attraction for Irish teenagers as it portrays lifestyles and images which are part of their social setting. Alcohol advertising promotes and reinforces the use of alcohol with a range of activities that teenagers aspire to, engage in and enjoy. For young people, the 'selling' aspects of alcohol advertisements are all to do with linking alcohol to positive images of desirable lifestyles, and little to do with selling the actual alcohol product advertised.

The findings of this study suggest that alcohol advertising is likely to have a greater impact among the younger age groups and the 15-17 year old girls than the older boys. The younger age group is particularly vulnerable, given that they perceive the advertising messages as saying that alcohol can help them have fun, make friends and become popular and those that don't drink are missing out. They also perceive alcohol advertisements as widening their knowledge of alcohol use, normalising it and portraying it as a safe and risk free activity. For most of the girls, alcohol use is seen as a way to increase self-confidence. The message from the advertisements for the older age groups, boys and girls, is that success and a good time results from alcohol use.

The advertisements also served to reinforce the alcohol beliefs expressed by the participants that the use of alcohol improves mood and contributes to social and sexual success.

The results of this study, based on young peoples' perception, clearly indicate that the alcohol advertisements infringe the Irish alcohol advertising codes in a number of ways. These include linking alcohol use with social or sexual success and implying that alcohol has therapeutic effects. The participants felt that three out of the four advertisements viewed were clearly targeting young people because of their use of themes and devices that have particular appeal for the young.

Alcohol advertising in the broadcast media is just one aspect of a marketing mix that includes radio, print media, billboards, sponsorships and alcohol-branded products. Young people have high exposure to these recurring positive messages about alcohol, which, over time, helps to create or reinforce their attitudes and beliefs and in turn can influence their intention and subsequent drinking patterns. Alcohol advertising emphasises the desirable aspects of drinking, portrays alcohol consumption as a safe and problem free practice and ignores the potential risks and negative consequences to the individual.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings of this study:

1. The exposure of children and adolescents to alcohol advertising in Ireland must be significantly reduced.
2. Based on the inadequacy of the current codes, there is a compelling case for an overhaul of the alcohol advertising codes, with particular attention to placement and effective monitoring.

3. Product information and brand names should not be misleading or ambiguous as to the nature and qualities of the product e.g. use of expressions such as 'light'.
4. Safety messages and/or health warnings should be part of alcohol advertisements.
5. Schools should provide both general and alcohol-specific media literacy training to enable young people to develop a sense of judgement in understanding media advertising.

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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Code of Advertising Standards for Ireland (1995)**

#### **6. Alcoholic Drinks**

- 6.1 Advertisements for alcoholic drinks (i.e. those that exceed 1.2% alcohol by volume) should be socially responsible and should not exploit the young or the immature. They should neither encourage excessive drinking nor present abstinence or moderation in a negative way.
- 6.2 An advertisement may refer to the social dimension or refreshing attributes of a drink but
- (a) should not emphasise the stimulant, sedative or tranquillising effects of a drink or imply that it can improve physical performance,
  - (b) should not imply that drinking is necessary to social or business success or distinction or that those who do not drink are less likely to be acceptable or successful than those who do,
  - (c) should not suggest that any drink can contribute towards sexual success or make the drinker more attractive to the opposite sex.
- 6.3 Advertisements should not portray drinking as a challenge nor should it be suggested that those who drink are brave or daring.
- 6.4 Advertisements should not be directed at young people or in any way encourage them to start drinking. Accordingly:
- (a) Anyone depicted in an alcohol advertisement should appear to be over twenty-five.
  - (b) Advertisements should not feature real or fictitious characters who are likely to appeal particularly to people under eighteen in a way that would encourage them to drink.
- 6.5 The social consequences of drinking should be recognised:
- (a) Advertisements should not suggest that a product can mask the effects of alcohol in tests on drivers; advertisements for breath testing devices should include a prominent warning of the dangers of drinking and driving.
  - (b) Immoderate drinking or regular solitary drinking should not be encouraged. Buying of large rounds should not be depicted or implied.
  - (c) Advertisements should not depict activities or locations where drinking alcohol would be unsafe or unwise. In particular advertisements should not associate the consumption of alcohol with operating machinery, driving, any activity relating to water or heights, or any other occupation that requires concentration in order to be done safely.
  - (d) Factual information can be given about the alcoholic strength of a particular drink but it should not be the principal theme of any advertisement. Drinks should not be promoted as being more intoxicating or presented as preferable because of their higher alcohol content.
- 6.6 Advertisers should ensure that low alcohol drinks (i.e. those that contain 1.2% alcohol (by volume or less) are not promoted in a way that encourages their inappropriate consumption.



## APPENDIX 2

### EU Directive 89/552/EEC, Television Without Frontiers Article 15

Television advertising and **teleshopping** for alcoholic beverages shall comply with the following criteria:

- (a) it may not be aimed specifically at minors or, in particular, depict minors consuming these beverages;
- (b) it shall not link the consumption of alcohol to enhanced physical performance or to driving;
- (c) it shall not create the impression that the consumption of alcohol contributes towards social or sexual success;
- (d) it shall not claim that alcohol has therapeutic qualities or that it is a stimulant, a sedative or a means of resolving personal conflicts;
- (e) it shall not encourage immoderate consumption of alcohol or present abstinence or moderation in a negative light;
- (f) it shall not place emphasis on high alcoholic content as being a positive quality of the beverage.

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **RTÉ Code of Standards for Broadcast Advertising The Advertising of Alcoholic Drink (2000)**

#### **Introduction**

Since 1967, RTÉ has had a special Code of Standards governing the advertising of alcoholic drink. The code has been revised and strengthened regularly to maintain the highest standards of alcoholic drink advertising - taking account of changes in presentation format and of public concern at the possible influence of this advertising particularly on the behaviour of young people.

In formulating this code RTÉ endeavours to marry two objectives - to protect the young and vulnerable from undue influences to consume alcohol and at the same time make it possible for companies selling alcohol to market their wares on our broadcast services.

#### **Categories Covered:**

No advertising is permitted on RTÉ's broadcast services for drinks of above 25% alcohol by volume e.g. whiskey, gin, vodka, brandy, etc., nor is advertising permitted for alcoholic fruit drinks - commonly referred to as 'alcopops'.

This code will apply to all other alcoholic drinks.

Where soft, i.e. non-alcoholic, drinks are promoted as mixers the code will operate in full. When promoted as soft drinks in their own right they are not subject to this code.

#### **General Conditions:**

Advertising for alcoholic drinks must not be directed at young people or encourage young people or non-drinkers to begin drinking.

Treatments which are likely to appeal to young people must not be used, and children must not be seen or heard in any advertisement for alcoholic drink.

Where young people appear in such advertisements they must be clearly at least 25 years of age.

No advertisement for alcoholic drink may feature any personality whose example young people are likely to follow or who has a particular appeal to people under 18 years of age.

Advertisements must not imply that drinking is essential for sports or social success or acceptance, or that refusal is a sign of weakness. It must never be implied that the successful outcome of any social occasion is dependent on the consumption of alcohol.

Particular care must be exercised when bar scenes or locations are used in advertising alcoholic drink. These scenes/locations must be handled with restraint, crowded situations and excessive heartiness may not be shown or implied. Sound effects, background music, singing or laughter must be kept to a reasonable minimum.

Advertisements must not suggest that a drink is to be preferred because of a higher alcohol content or intoxicating effect and must not place undue emphasis on alcoholic strength.

The advertising of alcoholic drinks should not be linked to sexual attraction or physical prowess either by word or allusion. Treatments featuring daring, toughness or bravado in association with drinking must not be used and alcoholic drinks must not be advertised in a context of aggressive or antisocial behaviour.

Nothing in an advertisement may link drinking with driving or with the use of potentially dangerous machinery. The consumption of alcohol in a working environment is only acceptable in advertising if it is clear that the working day has ended. It must not imply that alcoholic drink is the direct, automatic or only reward for success of work done.

Excessive display of bottles, cans, filled glasses or point of sale material must be avoided.

Advertisements must not suggest that regular solitary drinking is acceptable or that drinking is a means of resolving personal problems.

Advertisements must not claim that alcohol has therapeutic qualities nor offer it as a stimulant, sedative or tranquilliser. While advertisements may refer to refreshment after physical performance they must never give the impression that performance can be enhanced by drink or that alcoholic drink is a reward for achievement.

Advertising for alcoholic drinks must not publicise competitions, nor may advertising publicise sales promotions or encourage multiple purchases.

Advertisements must not foster, depict or imply immoderate drinking. This applies to the quantity of drink consumed in the advertisement and to the act of drinking portrayed.

References to buying rounds of drinks are not acceptable.

While RTÉ will ensure that alcoholic drink advertisements are not transmitted in or around programmes primarily intended for young viewers or listeners, advertisers are required to take account of the age profile of the viewers and listeners so that advertisements are communicated, so far as it is possible, to adults.

In addition to the foregoing, the advertising of alcoholic drink is subject to the conditions as set out in the RTÉ Code of Standards for Broadcast Advertising.

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Under the Broadcasting Act: Code of Standards of Practice and Prohibition in Advertising Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht (1995)**

#### **15. ALCOHOLIC DRINK**

The advertising of alcoholic drink may be accepted by broadcasters provided it complies fully with the following criteria:

- (a) Alcoholic drink advertising must not encourage young people or other non-drinkers to begin drinking - it must be cast towards brand selling and identification only.
- (b) This code recognises a voluntary code whereby spirit based alcoholic drinks (i.e. whiskey, gin, vodka, brandy, etc.) are not advertised on radio or television. The code is framed on the assumption that this situation will continue.
- (c) This code will apply to all other alcoholic drinks, i.e., beers, wines, sherries, fortified wines, vermouths, liqueurs, etc.
- (d) Where soft drinks are promoted as mixers this code will apply in full. When promoted as refreshments in their own right soft drinks are not subject to this code, but due care should be exercised if bar or similar locations are used.
- (e) Broadcasters will ensure that alcoholic drink advertisements are not transmitted in or around programmes primarily intended for young viewers or listeners; advertisers are required to take account of the age profile of the viewers and listeners so that advertisements are communicated, so far as it is possible, to adults.
- (f) Advertising shall not encourage immoderate consumption of alcohol or present abstinence or moderation in a negative light.
- (g) Advertisements shall not claim that alcohol has therapeutic qualities or that it is a stimulant, a sedative, tranquilliser or a means of resolving personal conflicts.
- (h) Advertising shall not place emphasis on high alcoholic content as being a positive quality of the beverage.
- (i) Advertisement for alcoholic drink may not be aimed specifically at minors or, in particular, depict minors consuming these beverages.
- (j) The advertising of alcoholic drinks should not create the impression that consumption of such beverages contributes towards sexual attraction and success, or social success.
- (k) Advertisements shall not link the consumption of alcohol to enhanced physical performance or to driving.

## APPENDIX 5

### Comparison of advertising codes

Code	Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland	EU - Television Without Frontiers	RTÉ	Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht
Immoderate drinking	6.5 (b) Immoderate drinking or regular solitary drinking should not be encouraged.	(e) it shall not encourage immoderate consumption of alcohol ...	Advertisements must not foster, depict or imply immoderate drinking.	(f) Advertising shall not encourage immoderate consumption of alcohol or present abstinence or moderation in a negative light.
Targeting young people	6.1 ...should not exploit the young or the immature. 6.4 ...should not be directed at young people or in any way encourage them to start drinking.	(a) it may not be aimed specifically at minors...	Advertising for alcoholic drinks must not be directed at young people or encourage young people or non-drinkers to begin drinking.	Alcoholic drink advertising must not encourage young people or non-drinkers to begin drinking. (i) Advertisement for alcoholic drink may not be aimed specifically at minors...
Therapeutic qualities	6.2 (a) ...should not emphasise the stimulant, sedative or tranquillising effects of a drink or imply that it can improve physical performance,	(d) it shall not claim that alcohol has therapeutic qualities or that it is a stimulant, a sedative or a means of resolving personal conflicts;	Advertisements must not claim that alcohol has therapeutic qualities nor offer it as a stimulant, sedative or tranquilliser.	(g) Advertisements shall not claim that alcohol has therapeutic qualities or that it is a stimulant, a sedative, tranquilliser or a means of resolving personal conflicts.
Social or sexual success	6.2 (b) ...should not imply that drinking is necessary to social or business success.. (c) ...should not suggest that any drink can contribute towards sexual success or make the drinker more attractive to the opposite sex.	(c) it shall not create the impression that the consumption of alcohol contributes towards social or sexual success;	...should not be linked to sexual attraction or physical prowess either by word or allusion. It must never be implied that the successful outcome of any social occasion is dependent on the consumption of alcohol.	(j) The advertising of alcoholic drink should not create the impression that consumption of such beverages contributes towards sexual attraction and success, or social success.
Age of characters	6.4 (a) Anyone depicted in an alcohol advertisement should appear to be over twenty-five.	(a) it may not be aimed specifically at minors or, in particular, depict minors consuming these beverages;	Where young people appear in such advertisements they must be clearly at least 25 years of age.	(i) Advertisement for alcoholic drink may not be aimed specifically at minors or, in particular, depict minors consuming these beverages.

## APPENDIX 6

### Expenditure on Alcohol Advertising 1996 vs 2000

Drink	Year	Press	TV	Cinema	Radio	Outdoor	Total
Beer & Cider	1996	1690.3	7575.4	1388.6	905.2	4484.3	16043.8
		(2146.2)	(9618.8)	(1763.2)	(1149.4)	(5693.9)	(20371.4)
	2000	1156.9	6680.3	1350.2	550.9	6326.7	16065.0
		(1469.0)	(8482.2)	(1714.4)	(699.5)	(8033.3)	(20398.3)
Wine, Sherries & Vermouth	1996	234.2	368.1	57.9	231.9	261.2	1153.3
		(297.4)	(467.4)	(73.5)	(294.5)	(331.7)	(1464.4)
	2000	375.6	271.5	44.9	151.5	136.7	980.2
		(476.9)	(344.7)	(57.0)	(192.4)	(173.6)	(1244.6)
Spirits, Liquers, Cocktails	1996	663.5	433.3	80.9	89.9	1917.7	3185.4
		(842.5)	(550.2)	(102.7)	(114.1)	(2435.0)	(4044.6)
	2000	1212.7	1423.5	174.8	34.4	4522.9	7368.3
		(1539.8)	(1807.5)	(222.0)	(43.7)	(5742.9)	(9355.8)
GRAND TOTALS	1996	2588.0	8376.8	1527.4	1227.0	6663.2	20436.4
		(3286.1)	(10636.3)	(1939.4)	(1558.0)	(8460.5)	(25948.9)
	2000	2745.2	8375.3	1569.9	736.8	10986.3	24413.5
		(3485.7)	(10634.4)	(1993.4)	(935.5)	(13949.7)	(30998.8)

Amount in IRL 1,000's

Amount in EURO 1,000's

Source: Association of Advertisers of Ireland Ltd.

## APPENDIX 7

### Focus Group Protocol

- Introduction: Introduce self, assure anonymity, describe procedure
- Distribute / collect HBSC Questionnaire
- Group discussion questions:
  1. What is your favourite advertisement (for any product)?
  2. What are your feelings about drinking alcohol?
  3. What do you think about people your age drinking?
  4. (a) Where have you seen alcohol ads?  
  
(b) Which drinks were being advertised?
- Distribute / collect billboard photograph questionnaires
- Show video of ad
  5. Describe the main characters in the advertisement. (prompts: age, personality, lifestyle)
  6. How much do you think they had to drink?
  7. What does this advertisement tell you about drinking (drink brand name)?
  8. Who is this advertisement aimed at?
  9. How would people who don't already drink (in general / your age) respond to this ad?
  10. How would people your age who have started to drink respond to this ad?
  11. What is your response to this ad?
- Repeat questions 5 - 11 for each ad
  12. Which advertisement did you like the best? What did you like about it?
- Note taker reads summary of discussion
  13. Have we missed anything? Is there anything else you'd like to add?

## APPENDIX 8

### Comparison of Study Participants (IAA) and HBSC sample

		12-14 yrs		15-17 yrs	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Participants		n=33	n=54	n=44	n=47
		*IAA (HBSC)	*IAA (HBSC)	*IAA (HBSC)	*IAA (HBSC)
Drinking Pattern:		%	%	%	%
<b>Drink monthly</b>		34(26)	24(16)	64(58)	57(50)
<i>Beverage type at least monthly:</i>					
Beer		26(16)	15(6)	41(47)	34(21)
Cider		21(16)	15(10)	32(34)	21(27)
Spirits		9(10)	17(7)	27(28)	36(28)
Alcopops		18(10)	13(9)	21(15)	26(22)
Wine		-	6(6)	9(11)	2(11)
Being really drunk					
1-10 times		29(23)	33(15)	36(39)	34(41)
More than 10 times		6(4)	34(18)	34(18)	28(8)
<b>Hrs watching TV</b>					
4 or more hours per day		40(28)	31(22)	27(19)	19(15)
Quality of life					
<b>Feel unhappy</b>		6(8)	11(13)	2(13)	11(19)
Evenings with friends					
5 or more evenings		69(34)	69(23)	39(29)	70(17)

\*IAA is present study - Impact of Alcohol Advertising